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THE SOCIALIST WOMAN'S GUIDE TO INTELLIGENCE

By the Same Author

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COMMON SENSE ECONOMICS

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THE SOCIALIST WOMAN'S GUIDE TO INTELLIGENCE

A REPLY TO MR. SHAW

By Mrs. LE MESURIER

ERNEST BENN LIMITED
LONDON: BOUVERIE HOUSE, E.C.4

HX246 .S545

First Published in
1929
Printed
in
Great Britain

PREFACE

THE object of a preface is, or should be, to state briefly and clearly what a book is about, and what it is getting at, so as to enable those who are not interested to avoid it with the greater ease. In this case, however, such an office is superfluous. Those who have read Mr. Shaw's book will know very well the wide country he has traversed, and will understand that I criticize and dissent from his conclusions. Those who have lacked time, or endurance, or funds for its purchase and perusal, but who are nevertheless interested in the subject, will find Mr. Shaw's views clearly summarized, and often quoted verbatim, and full references given to chapter and verse, so that they can easily follow the argument.

A short book of some fifty thousand words as against two hundred thousand, and of a couple of hundred small pages as against nearly five hundred large ones, necessarily imposes limitations. But within them I have tried to be scrupulously fair, stating every point where I am in agreement, and, so far as my powers of understanding and expression go, misrepresenting nothing. I am conscious that it may seem to savour of audacity for me to attempt to cross swords with a giant like Mr. Shaw, but his book has provoked me past silence. I have put before my readers as clearly as I could some of the flaws, fallacies and inconsistencies with which it seems to me to bristle!

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It is amazing that even an ordinarily clever man, much less one with a super-brain like Mr. Shaw's, should have perpetrated seriously some of the remarks he has allowed himself to make. It is a still greater strain on credulity to suppose that he really believed them all himself. Yet in the main I cling to my belief in Mr. Shaw's sincerity.

A few words as to my title, which may, I fear, seem somewhat provocative. It is not so intended. I am not a prey to the delusion that one party in the State is more lacking in intelligence than another, though I may think one in more urgent need of guidance on questions of fact, and especially economic fact. But the full title of Mr. Shaw's book was, it will be remembered, " The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism." This was such a mouthful that the last two words promptly dropped out, and often only the first four were used. In the same way it would have been impossibly long and tedious to give my book the full reversed title and call it " The Socialist and Capitalist Woman's Guide to Intelligence," though that would have conveyed my meaning more adequately.

I owe more thanks than I can well express, here, to my son, who read my book in manuscript, and made most valuable criticisms and suggestions. Without his help I could hardly have undertaken it. My brother also gave me much appreciated assistance.

As this does not profess to be a textbook, or to deal exhaustively with the subject matter of Socialism, but merely to reply to specific contentions put forward by Mr. Shaw, I have not quoted economic or other authorities, but simply put forward my own views and ideas—those, not of an expert, but of an ordinary

woman in the street. That is to say, I have not quoted deliberately and intentionally, but I think it highly probable that I have done so unconsciously, not remembering to what source I owe some of my information or my attitude towards it. I desire, therefore, if that is the case, to offer at once my thanks and my apologies.

LILIAN LE MESURIER.

January, 1929.

DEDICATION

TO MY SISTERS,

THE WOMEN WHO THINK,

AND THE WOMEN WHO DON'T THINK—MUCH—YET!

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CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF IT

It would be easy, my dear sisters, to take the view that no answer to Mr. Shaw's book was required, because (as some say) it was evidently written with his tongue in his cheek; or, if we are to take it seriously, (as for my part I think, with certain reservations, we should do and are meant to do), still, being women of intelligence, we are qualified to separate the wheat from the chaff, and need no further guidance.

But is this so? Sundry comments and queries make it seem rather doubtful. And, in the first place, are we all intelligent women? We need not be troubled by any qualms or modest doubts on this point if we accept Mr. Shaw as our guide, because he himself assures us, not once but several times, that if we have bought and read his book we are all right in that respect, and our intelligence is thereby guaranteed. People of a naturally cautious disposition may still hesitate, whether with regard to themselves or their neighbours, but at the same time, frankly, it is not women's intelligence that need worry us. Presumably it is much on a level with that of the average man, and whether or not that is a compliment each woman must decide for herself! But what is doubtful, even in this year of grace, is our education: both our

knowledge of facts, and our possession of such mental training as will enable us to form a sound judgment upon them. It is so easy to be intelligent enough to enjoy Mr. Shaw's brilliant wit and scathing arraignment of things as they are, and so much more difficult to analyze his somewhat incoherent arguments, to notice all that he has omitted, to put a finger on all the red herrings he has deftly drawn across the trail, and to observe just where he has carefully *not* explained what his Socialism would mean in practice.

Still, does this very much matter? Mr. Shaw's position in literature is so high, and his influence so great, that it matters very seriously. There are many Shavian "hot-gospellers" who are convinced that if G. B. S. says a thing it must be true, and indeed the final last word of advanced truth! There are many others who, even though not really convinced, will still not venture to raise their private thoughts against his, much less their voices! To do him justice he is constantly urging women to think for themselves, and to have the courage of their own opinions, and we will take him at his word in this. For, with more than six million new women voters added to the electoral list, how all-important it is that they should weigh well the counsels that are offered to them, and think rightly.

Let it be plain from the very start that I have an enormous admiration for Mr. Shaw's genius and his great contribution to the intellectual life of our time. All my generation owe him an unspeakable debt of gratitude for his drastic showing up of many shams and shallow humbugs, which served, too often, as substitutes for thought; and for the compelling power

with which he forced us to examine our foundations, and give a reason for the faith—if any—which was in us. Also, repeated reading of his plays and prefaces through long years has convinced many of us that he is the finest company in the world. Personally, whenever I am thoroughly bored with life, I find myself turning to a certain shelf of grey-green volumes and taking one down for consolation. Even as to this vast " pamphlet " on Socialism and Capitalism, whatever else may be said about or against it, this must be said : that any intelligent woman is depriving herself of a pleasure and a help to self-education if she does not read it. The trenchant and amusing way in which Mr. Shaw sums up and explains some eternal truths is in delightful contrast with the dullness and difficulty of many economic prophets. His sketch of our party system, its advantages, drawbacks, and possible developments, teaches more in a light-hearted hour than a dozen ponderous lectures. So, too, the discourses on money and on the vital importance of a stable currency. And, best of all, there are (as may always be found in Mr. Shaw's work by those who come to learn and not to scoff) things so searchingly beautiful as to religion and personal honour, so profoundly true as to education, that, in spite of all our irritation at some of " his little ways," we can only be thankful for him, as I have been from the days of " Arms and the Man " and " Plays for Puritans," down to " Back to Methuselah " and " Saint Joan." If therefore any woman reading so far has come expecting wholesale abuse of Mr. Shaw and the Socialists, and all their works and ways, it is only fair to warn her that she has come to the wrong box and wasted her money on the wrong book.

At this juncture, perhaps, those of you, my dear sisters, who are Capitalists, and who have been taught to regard any utterance of G. B. S. as more than suspect, may turn on me, and exclaim in the words of King Balak when he upbraided the prophet Balaam : " I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them altogether." Whilst, on the other hand, those of you who are Socialists will quote at me the text : " She that is not with us is against us." Thus it seems that I must fall between two stools and please no one ! But there is this consolation, that the " trimmer," the moderate man or woman, is generally right ! There is a vast " middle party " in this essentially sane and sensible country, composed of people who are not interested in party politics as such ; more inclined, indeed, to cry : " A plague on both your houses ; "—who desire no knock-out blow to one side, nor special pleading for the other. But they do intensely desire to understand the rights and wrongs of any question ; not to be led away by sentimentalities or high-flown theories that will not stand the test of everyday common-sense experience ; still less to harden their hearts, and go " all-out " selfishly for their own ends, disregarding the just claims and needs of others ; but to do the square thing, and have a fair deal all round. In fact, if one may dare to bring in religion, and quote the words of a mighty poet and prophet, one named Micah, an enormous number of people do ask themselves, though not, perhaps, in so many words, the old question : " What doth the Lord thy God require of thee ? " and accept in substance his answer : " To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God."

To cover the confusion and embarrassment which are apt to overcome Englishwomen at any reference to those higher feelings and motives, which they like to ignore or deny, although they nearly all possess and secretly value them, let us get to low and comfortable ground again, and justify fairness to Mr. Shaw on the score of expediency. It is a great error in tactics for people who are out to get things done, and not merely to score a party advantage, not to welcome with effusion anything that they really approve and agree with, no matter by whom it may be said or done. We shall find that a great many of Mr. Shaw's observations (on strikes, for instance, and death duties, to take at random two very different subjects), are so sound on many points from the Conservative point of view, that any Capitalist orator will appreciate their value. And his comments on some of the injustices and stupidities of our present civilization, his urgent insistence on the duty of everyone sharing the national work in some form or other, will be commended not only by Socialists, but by most people of humanity and good sense, whatever their political label may be.

All this common ground is to the good, and it is most important not to lose sight of it. But it will not blind us to the fact that there is a real, genuine, and very acute cleavage of opinion between us and Mr. Shaw, and that we shall quickly come to a point where we must join issue. Indeed we shall do this with all the more decision and confidence if we have done full justice to the matters on which we feel no vital difference.

After so much praise, does it seem to savour of

ingratitude or inconsistency to venture to examine critically a work of G. B. S. ? or of audacity to presume to disagree with most of his conclusions ? I think not. Great geniuses have great responsibilities, and it is all the more because of the great opinion which I have so long had of him, that I am anxious to offer an antidote to those who, led away by their enthusiasm and the prestige of his name, may find themselves seriously misguided by his " Guide." Of course, it is not easy to calculate what effect the prodigious tome will actually have in practice upon its readers. There is such a thing as contra-suggestion ! Take one case in point : that of a woman with strong Labour leanings, who had yet always avoided their party label and kept out of their camp, not because she did not agree with their criticisms upon the manifold and manifest evils of present society, but because she felt a secret aversion to some of the Socialist ideals, and a deep distrust of their methods when it came to suggesting remedies. She anticipated Mr. Shaw's book with mixed feelings and some misgivings. For surely, she thought, Mr. Shaw would be one too many for her, and convince her, even against her will, either that she was already a Socialist without knowing it, or that she must immediately become one !

Judge then of her unfeigned surprise when, after a careful study of the monumental work, she found that Mr. Shaw had once again done for her what he had so often done in the past : he had helped to clear her mind ; but with quite different results to those she had expected, or he, perhaps, intended ! For, if this were Socialism (and his authority as well as his ability forbade her to doubt his diagnosis), then she

knew she could never wish for it nor work for it. Something deep down, instinctive and elemental in her nature, apart from all the rational arguments for and against, rose up and forbade it.

But, obviously, we cannot depend on this reaction in all or most cases. In fact the more usual and ordinary one would probably be a dazed acceptance of the conclusions of the book. It is impossible to absolve Mr. Shaw from the charge of using his gifts to confuse and bewilder and obscure, rather than to enlighten. Again and again, as I propose to point out in detail later, Mr. Shaw states a difficulty with his usual brilliant terseness, and writes an amusing paragraph which conveys to a casual reader that he has disposed of the objection, whereas it has not, in fact, been met or answered at all. What has really happened is that Mr. Shaw has recognized its reality, thus giving a sense of confidence in his fairness; has faced it boldly; and then?—passed by on the other side; or, more accurately, walked off at a tangent on some distracting side issue, with which he deals in such dazzling fashion that the main question gets neglected and lost sight of. But fine words butter no parsnips, and the Intelligent Woman, be she Socialist or Capitalist, is first and last concerned with those elementary truths of economics, (or housekeeping—it means the same thing), which determine the presence or absence of parsnips from her pot! (In case you happen to abominate parsnips, substitute in this sentence beans and bacon, or pork and potatoes, or the roast beef of old England, according to taste!)

One real difficulty in dealing with Mr. Shaw's

" Guide " is his failure to define his terms, a matter of the first importance in economics. Another is his unfortunate tendency to mix up ethical with economic arguments. Both of these should always be most carefully considered and compared, but never entangled. Otherwise the confusion becomes almost hopeless, and even an intelligent reader is left feeling worried and muddled. However, we must do our best to sort the arguments out, and see what they really mean.

CHAPTER II

EQUALITY OF INCOME

To spare your time—for I have no wish to write at such prodigious length as Mr. Shaw, and no reason to believe you would bear patiently with me if I did—I do not propose to take you in detail page by page, pointing out all the matters in which I invite you to differ furiously from the guidance offered you, but will come at once to what is evidently the crux of the whole matter. That is the question which Mr. Shaw definitely makes the test of whether or no you are a true believer in Socialism: the question of equality of income. There is no mistake about it. On pages 93 and 94 it is explicitly stated that "Socialism means equality of income and nothing else"; that other things, such as equality of opportunity, are only its conditions or consequences. The true Socialist, we are told, is in favour of "dividing up the income of the country equally between everybody, making no distinction between lords and labourers, babies in arms and able-bodied adults, drunkards and teetotallers, archbishops and sextons, sinners and saints."

We are not surprised to hear that many educated Socialists would assure us all this was a mere ignorant delusion of the man in the street, and that they

believed in no such crazy nonsense! But Mr. Shaw brushes opposition contemptuously aside. Equality of opportunity, he says, is impossible, and as an instance he exclaims: "Give your son a fountain-pen and a ream of paper, and tell him that he now has an equal opportunity with me of writing plays, and see what he will say to you!"

This is the sort of thing that makes it difficult to take the book seriously. If we must, then we have to conclude that Mr. Shaw rates his Intelligent Woman's intelligence insultingly low. It is impossible to know whether it will ever be practicable to have full equality of opportunity, though evidently we could have a much greater degree of it than we do now, but it is obvious that no reasonable person means by the phrase anything more or less than that everyone should have opportunity to develop fully his or her own individual talents and capacities, whatever they may be. No one is so silly as to suggest that you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, or a genius out of a mental defective, nor an Einstein out of a Mr. Shaw. But if by superhuman powers you could do such a thing, and wished to do it, you would not call it giving equality of opportunity, but equality and identity of capacity. It is impossible to believe that this, which is, after all, only the plain English of it, was not just as apparent to Mr. Shaw as to anyone else.

But now let us examine his astonishing proposition more closely.

First of all you must be warned that in the earliest stages of his argument, our self-elected guide causes

some unnecessary confusion by using, instead of his usual term "equality of income," the phrase "equal share of the wealth of the country." This phrase suggests the *capital* wealth of the country, as distinguished from the national dividend or income. One woman, at least, flung down the book impatiently at this stage (page 19), saying that surely it was waste of time to go over old exploded fallacies of this kind in 1928. She was barely pacified when it was pointed out that Mr. Shaw did not mean, and that it would be very rash to suppose him capable of meaning, what she supposed, and what indeed his actual words certainly appeared to mean. For he stresses carefully at a later period that "nothing stays put," and it is, I suppose, evident to any woman who stops to reflect for a moment, that an "equal division of the wealth of the country" in the sense of capital wealth could not stay equal for seven weeks or seven days, or indeed probably seven hours, *if you allowed any sort of liberty of action to the individual.* Equality of Income which, as he makes abundantly clear later on, is what Mr. Shaw really means, *would be theoretically possible*; but only if and because it was made illegal, and in fact a heavily punishable offence, to save and invest your income in any way whatsoever. The only permissible alternatives would be to spend it or forfeit it; the idea being to make poverty not only unnecessary but a crime, and not only a crime but impossible. As to this last, however, I am not so sure. To make it work, the income could hardly be paid annually or quarterly, for if so there would still be the army of incorrigible spendthrifts who would have nothing left after a riotous few days, and would again be plunged in that poverty which is the unpardonable sin of Mr. Shaw's gospel.

There is a good deal to be said for this view of poverty, granting the equal start which is presupposed. But, however severely you punished the offence, so long as it continued to exist your problem would not be solved. So, presumably, the equal incomes would have to be paid weekly, to minimize the dangers indicated. Such a method would seem very wasteful and expensive, consuming a good deal of the nation's wealth in the process, but it would not, of course, be in any way impossible.

Mr. Shaw further explains that it would not be allowable for any citizen to "contract out" so to speak, and choose to have less than his equal share of the national income, even though his tastes and habits made him willing and anxious to do so. But this will be better dealt with later on when we come to discuss the corollary of the equal incomes, viz. equality of work. For the moment we will pass instead to a consideration of the arguments which lead up to the conclusion presented to us, that equality of income is the only thing that will work! That is one of the most surprising expressions of opinion in the whole 470 pages. Many people who profess and call themselves Socialists, declare that it *ought* to work and that it *would* work if only people were different. But it is unique to find someone prepared to state definitely his conviction that it *will* work and work *well*, and not only that, but that it is the *only* thing that will answer!

Mr. Shaw's method is this. He examines six other ways of dividing up the national income, writes some true and many amusing things about them, and proclaims them all bad or impossible! But, as many other

people will no doubt declare with equal vehemence that Mr. Shaw's alternative plan of equal division is both bad and impossible, and as his arguments are not very convincing, I propose, my dear sisters, that we should scrutinize them ! We will not take them in his order, but deal first with what we can agree about, so as to eliminate as far as may be.

We shall probably all agree—I, at least, am quite ready to do so—that the " plan of grab " ; letting each of us take what we can snatch, by fair means or foul, is thoroughly bad, both morally and materially. I will only add that Mr. Shaw does less than justice to the means already taken with considerable and ever increasing success to check such an undesirable state of things. Man-made laws are not perfect, and economic laws do not always act quickly enough to prevent great personal hardship, but it seems simply untrue in this era of factory and shop legislation, and of employers' compulsory contributions to insurance and other benefits for their employees, to say that : " We still allow business to be conducted on the principle of letting everyone make what he can out of it, without considering anyone but himself." It is true that " everyone is free in business to get as much and give as little for his money as he can induce his customers to put up with." But the price-cutting necessarily induced by free competition brings down overcharges as a rule very promptly, and few customers, (who, after all, have their own remedies of substitution, or doing without,) would prefer the alternative of Government-fixed prices after their experience during the war. Indeed, the instance which Mr. Shaw chooses as one where " freedom produces such bad results that new

laws are continually being made to restrain it," is not a very happy one. He is, perhaps, wise merely to glance at it hastily, if, as appears from the context, he is referring to the Rent Restrictions Act. For though that Act was probably a necessary evil to avoid another and worse one, it is difficult to look back upon it with any great measure of satisfaction. Most likely Mr. Shaw does not do so himself, but, if not, he conveys a misleading impression.

In Chapters II and XII he discourses on Oligarchy and on the system of Distribution by Class. Here we all hoped for a serious argument, but he disappoints us by going off to attack various men of straw and worry them as a terrier does a rat. Having pointed out that the reason why, under our present system, we have arranged to give certain people (e.g. the King and other public dignitaries) bigger incomes than others, is to maintain a certain position for them and ensure that they shall be treated with respect and deference ; he does not follow this out and tell us whether he considers it a bad thing; and, if so, why; and what other alternative means he would prefer to use ; but confuses the issue in half a dozen ways. He tells us that money is not the secret of command, and authority is not proportionate to income. But has anyone asserted the contrary view ? He refers to the comparative poverty of the Pope, to the fact that the captain of a liner or the colonel of a regiment may be the poorest man at the saloon table or in the mess. He notices the fact that millionaires obey policemen, and that social precedence is not according to one's banking account. All this may or may not amuse you, according to your taste, but where does it lead to ?

Mr. Shaw never comes to the point and tells us straight whether he means that, when his equality of income was at last a realized fact, kings and public dignitaries would be superfluous and simply drop out ; or whether they would continue to exist and exercise authority either by virtue of personal superiority, or of their rank, unsupported by any outward distinctions !

He also asks us to get rid of the notion, which he apologizes for suspecting that perhaps we entertain, that it costs some people more to live than others, and proceeds to explain that the King eats and drinks no more than a labourer and probably less. But, surely, all this is not only beside the point, but rather irritating nonsense ! The plain fact is that it *does* cost some people very much more than others to live with an equal sense of comfort and well-being. And this is not merely from a difference in class and class habits, though that is what we mean when we speak of the different " standard of life " of a clerk or a labourer or a professional man. But, apart from that, there are personal differences of taste, not to speak of digestion ! One man not only thrives on being a simple-lifer but enjoys it, and, however large his income, spends only the smallest amount on his personal expenditure, whether for food or clothing or travel or amusement. Another, who may be just as good and valuable a citizen, but of different tastes and habits, will spend five or ten times as much, if he has it to spend, and feel better in health and temper and brain for it ! Therefore there will be very far from general agreement with Mr. Shaw's assertion that any two people in reasonably comfortable circumstances will spend the same sum on their personal needs and satisfactions. He may wish

it were so, and think people would be better and nicer if they were all alike in these respects, or like him (whatever his own idiosyncrasies and tastes and standards may be). But, "it just isn't so!" In the chapter on Oligarchy his criticisms do not appear to be directed against the system itself so much as against unworthy oligarchs and abuses of the system. And with these strictures we can sympathize very heartily.

But when he turns to the plans of dividing up according to the amount produced, or according to the merits of the producer, "to each what she produces or what she deserves," he does not criticize or argue, but says simply that this "cannot be done." And, of course, he is quite right, if he means that no one can presume to measure accurately the precise share any individual has contributed to the production of wealth, nor to judge infallibly of their utility or moral worth. But this does not prevent one from having a very good working knowledge that some have produced more than others, and that some are less worthy than others. (The term "less worthy" is, of course, only used here in an economic sense, and in an ethical sense so far as civic qualities are concerned). There is a great difference between abstract truth and infallible accuracy on the one hand, and relative accuracy on the other, and the latter is quite good enough for most practical purposes in a workaday world. Granted that no woman can rightly judge the inner heart of another, yet she *can* judge very well whether she finds her a satisfactory fellow-worker, a loyal leader, a faithful servant, a reliable friend and neighbour! There may be hard cases in which it is difficult to gauge whether a prime minister or a poet, a schoolmistress or a

tradesman, has rendered the most valuable service to the State and Nation. But it is not difficult to know that some in all these classes unquestionably stand out head and shoulders above the rest. And I entirely repudiate the idea that because I am unable, and have no desire, to weigh accurately the merits and shortcomings of Sarah and Eliza, and to portion out praise and blame with the confidence of a god, therefore it is impossible or unjustifiable for me to make any difference between them. I know very well that one is an industrious, self-respecting and willing worker in my house, careful and conscientious, a valued friend. And to me her price is above rubies. I know that the other is careless and slovenly, not scrupulous in little things nor strictly truthful, ungrateful for small kindnesses, dirty, and stupid at her work. And I keep her only just so long as is necessary to find a better person to replace her !

Someone may say here—and we can readily agree—that if you go back to ultimate causes, all these faults and inefficiencies are not really Eliza's own fault ; that perhaps she had poor chances, came of bad stock and from a demoralizing home. Why then should her shortcomings be visited upon her by paying her less than Sarah, or by promptly getting rid of her and so letting her sink to less well-paid situations ? The answer to this question—the practical objection to treating them on an equal footing—is not that you are doing an injustice to Sarah ; nor even (though I think this is true), that you are weakening one motive to excellence, and discouraging other Sarahs from taking the trouble to attain a high standard of conduct and efficiency. No, the most serious part of the business is

that you are doing an injury to Eliza by taking away from her a direct and easily grasped incentive to improvement. Unless she is a mental defective (in which case, obviously, she should be segregated in a suitable institution, and very kindly treated !) she, like everyone else, is capable of getting better or worse. In fact, she is almost bound to do one or the other. If, therefore, you remove the obvious inducements which she can understand to pull herself together and go up-hill, she will inevitably get slacker and slacker, and slide down-hill. The same principle applies, of course, to all workers, whether in factories, shops or offices.

It is characteristic of Mr. Shaw's little unfairnesses in this book, that when speaking of domestic servants he alludes to their semi-slavery and " getting occasional evenings out." This is unnecessary to his argument, which is essentially true, viz. that under the best possible conditions, domestic servants, like mothers, cannot have as much independence and leisure as, say, typists or factory workers. But, besides being unnecessary, it is, as Mr. Shaw well knows, wide of the mark. He shows amusingly enough on another page how thoroughly aware he is that far from "an occasional evening out," the free evenings of servants are as the laws of the Medes and Persians, and that employers (he says he would not dare to call them mistresses) tread on egg-shells to avoid interference ! Husbands and sons have been driven, if not exactly to drink and the devil, at least to the club and strong language, by the immutable order of cold Sunday supper and such-like domestic tyrannies ! This, however, is by the way.

Mr. Shaw says (page 43) that it is perhaps the

greatest folly of which a nation can be guilty, to use poverty as a sort of punishment for offences that it does not send people to prison for. " It is easy to say of a lazy man : Oh ! let him be poor, it serves him right for being lazy : it will teach him a lesson." But, " we cannot afford to have poor people anyhow, whether they be lazy or busy, drunken or sober, virtuous or vicious, thrifty or careless, wise or foolish. If they deserve to suffer let them be made to suffer in some other way." But he does not indicate in what other way ! It is scarcely conceivable that, with his known views, he would approve of sending them to prison ! Certainly he might approve (judging from some of his writings) of a lethal chamber, but we need hardly consider that seriously ! And if he suggested a training colony where all idle and vicious people might be disciplined and taught to be industrious (which is probably really the best solution, and one for which there is much to be said), it would certainly not be a cheap remedy for the " innocent neighbours." It is very true that we cannot afford to have poor people—people consuming wealth and neither producing it nor rendering services to facilitate its production, (which is, of course, just as important a contribution, and often the most important of all). But to try and better the position by giving lazy or vicious people the same reward as to industrious producers, and, further, making it impossible for them to alienate their share in other folks' hard-won earnings, no matter how bad their conduct, seems a very singular idea.

It is even more odd if one considers it not from the standpoint of expediency and its practical economic consequences, but from the point of view of morals !

I am irresistably reminded of a little verse which I heard quoted in my early childhood, and which left an indelible mark on my memory :

> " What is a Communist ? One who has yearnings
> For equal division of unequal earnings !
> Idler, or bungler, or both, he is willing
> To fork out his penny and pocket your shilling ! "

It still seems applicable !

CHAPTER III

SOME BASIC TRAITS OF HUMAN NATURE

THERE are, of course, some people who have an unnatural and insatiable—one might almost describe it as a morbid—appetite for work ! but all the evidence seems to show that they are in a small minority. They consist chiefly of those who have some marked creative gift, which it causes them an almost physical distress and unrest not to exercise ; and even they have alternating periods, probably essential to give opportunity of recuperation, when they desire complete idleness as much as the veriest slacker. But the great mass of mankind does not take readily and kindly to the idea of work, in the sense of regular continuous exertion either physical or mental, done not because you are in the mood and wish to do it, but because you have to do it. Yet the world's work must for the most part be done in this way, not at odd times as the spirit moves one. And the common sense of mankind has got the work done, and made the necessary drudgery tolerable, by linking with it the idea of a reward, more reward for more effort, until the acquired habit of hard work is so deeply ingrained that it overcomes the natural habit of laziness, and, by association of ideas becomes even pleasant !

How many a young man submits to the dull routine

work of an office, a shop, a factory, not for itself, for too often it gives but little scope for his individual tastes and gifts to have play, but because of what it brings him, or what he hopes it will bring him some day. And this sweetens all his toil. At present, perhaps, he is earning a bare livelihood, but next year he hopes for a rise, then, perhaps, to get married. And so long as he has a fair chance of realizing his hopes, and winning the added comforts he rightly desires, by hard work and steady industry, this seems a far happier as well as more wholesome way than any system which would give him his equal share of the national income straight away at the beginning of his life, irrespective of his own greater or less efforts. Mr. Shaw does not agree, but thinks he ought to be able to mate and marry as soon as he feels like it, without bothering as to ways and means, simply by virtue of his natural rights as a citizen of the Socialist State. Even without going into the amazing complications which must result with regard to the population question (which he recognizes but does not show us any way out of), it is hard to think he is right. If you are doubtful about this, remember how little people seem to value the communal services which they receive without consciously paying for them and without exercising any power of direct choice, or making any special effort or sacrifice. Mr. Shaw himself notices this point in another connection. No one is suggesting that it is not right and desirable that some, at any rate, of these communal services should be supplied to the whole population, whether they appreciate them or not, and perhaps some that are not at present so supplied. A personal indifference to the advantages of drains, clean water, or education, cannot be allowed to endanger or impoverish

the community at large, as individualists will cordially agree. But, contrasting the attitude displayed towards these services with the high appreciation shown, for example, of Polytechnic classes, where the student must at least pay something for the tuition she chooses and desires; or the pride and pleasure with which a man living in a primitive country will elaborate his own water supply and sanitary system, the point emerges clearly enough. It is human nature to enjoy far more what you have individually won for yourself, than what you are allotted in common with everyone else by the machinery of the law.

But, apart from this, consider again that natural instinctive human tendency to laziness which we noticed above, and its results if unchecked. One is written down as reactionary and old-fashioned nowadays if one has a good word to say for the Poor Law Commission of 1834. And certainly there are few lovers or defenders of the Poor Law arrangements which they bequeathed, and many of us have waited impatiently many years for much-needed reforms. But, all the same, convinced believers in "the principle of Less Eligibility" need not seek any place of repentance or apology. Hard and cruel as it may seem, and indeed is, that a man and his family should suffer any degree, even the smallest, of deprivation, because he is unemployed from no shadow of fault of his own, yet it is impossible to eradicate a reluctant inward conviction that it is an absolutely necessary and inevitable hardship, unless one of the strongest motives to human effort is to be fatally weakened.

This is said in no insulting or slighting spirit, nor

with any mean or cynical view of human nature. But let those who know their own weaknesses and realize themselves to be ordinary average specimens of humanity, ask themselves how they would react if this motive were abolished! At the risk of earning the contempt of Mr. Shaw, honesty will compel most of us to doubt whether we should come out of such a test as well as an idealist would wish. We are secretly conscious of a certain infirmity of purpose. We may believe in work; we may even really like work more than most people do. But if, after months of fairly arduous toil, our job came to an end from no fault or remissness of our own, and we knew that we should be maintained at precisely the same level of comfort until we found a new one, we cannot avoid the suspicion that we should not exert ourselves unreasonably to find that new job with the least possible delay. We should seek (and how easily find!) many excellent reasons or excuses for taking a little well-deserved holiday at the public expense! If you multiply that situation a million-fold, you will see how important to the nation, and indeed to the world, it is, that the principle of Less Eligibility should be maintained. And if you add all those who have lost, or who are likely to lose their jobs, not quite without fault or remissness of their own—and how hard it is to be sure on this point!—then the matter assumes even more colossal proportions.

Perhaps, for the benefit of those who have not happened to train at Schools of Economics, nor bothered to read Industrial History (and few will dare to think harshly of them for that, knowing how pressed for time most wives and mothers and sisters are!) it should be explained that the "Principle" referred to means

simply that no person, whether unemployed by his own fault, or from economic or political causes over which he has absolutely no control, and who *may* therefore be entirely blameless in the matter, shall, by virtue of our sympathy with him or her, enjoy quite as good a position as can be earned by the man or woman who is doing a full day's work. Private charity may and does step in. Insurance schemes do and should intervene, and there are yet other ways in which the State can alleviate hardships that all deplore. But the principle of Less Eligibility, i.e. that you must not make the position of the woman who is not working, however reluctantly, quite so good as that of the woman who is bearing the burden of a full day's labour, must remain an absolutely inviolable principle, unless we want to manufacture slackers, and so to soften the temporarily unemployed that they become the permanently unemployable.

But when all this is said, please take notice, my individualist sisters, it does not mean that you or I or any unemployed woman, should be stoically left to misery or starvation. Our social conscience is too awakened in this twentieth century to let us sleep easily if we acquiesced in any such outrage.

If the wife of a good fellow, out of work by no fault of his own, sees her children hungry or ill, while she is unable to give them what they need, she will, inevitably, take up with Socialism, or Communism, or Bolshevism, or any other "ism" placed before her, that seems to offer a chance of providing for their necessities. But that does not prove that she is on the right tack. A woman in such a position is naturally—I will almost

add rightly and properly—a tigress ! But she is not a good student of political economy, nor a wise judge of its complex problems. She will scoff at economic " laws " and " principles."

But the principle of Less Eligibility can and should be used to justify the levelling up of the standard of life, and not to lower it. There should be a rock-bottom minimum level of subsistence, below which no citizen should be suffered to fall, for his own sake in the name of humanity, and for the whole society's sake in the name of expediency ; because we are all members one of another. And that lowest level would seem reasonably to be the one suitable for those who, having broken the laws of their Commonwealth, are detained at the common cost in the common prisons. Such a level should mean, as it does to-day, shelter, clothing, necessary attendance in sickness, spiritual ministrations, and sufficient suitable food to maintain the body in health, *but with no luxuries of any kind :* nothing that is not absolutely essential to life, if it is to be lived without physical, mental or moral deterioration.

The position of those who have broken no law, yet who are out of work and a tax on the resources of the whole because of certain faults and inefficiencies of their own, when these can be established, should evidently be rather more eligible than that of the criminal classes. And of those who are unemployed from no fault of their own but simply from slackness of trade, it should be more eligible still. But the position of those who are working and producing must always be kept the *most* eligible, otherwise the stimulus to hard and often uncongenial toil will fail, except in few exceptional cases.

Any intelligent woman, whether Socialist or Capitalist, who has followed the above argument, will not fail to point out that " things as they are " do not comply with these requirements. These would require that the worst-paid class of workers, who are presumably producing goods or services satisfactorily, since they are kept at their job, ought to receive a much higher wage than many of them do at present, in order to reach the standard of life admitted as necessary even for those who are undergoing punishment. Of course! Higher wages, and higher production with better marketing to make these possible, are the urgent need and desire of the day. It is a terrible and tragic thing to read in a careful, well-informed article in our foremost journal, endorsed by its own responsible leading article (see *The Times*, September 13th, 1928), with regard to one of our great industries, coal-mining, that : " There is no literal starvation among the unemployed Northern miners, but a very large number of silent people are not having as much to eat as for their health's sake they need. . . . When, after years of settled married life, there is, for the first time, nothing but bread and butter for Sunday dinner, it is a grim day. . . . *A man with a family who works four days a week is less well off than if he were wholly unemployed and drawing unemployment benefit.*" There is nothing in ethics or economics which can justify such a state of things. It is an outrage on decent feelings. But equally there is nothing to excuse such an anomaly as is revealed in the lines I have italicized. This abandonment of the principle of less eligibility is an outrage on common sense.

It is a curious commentary on the above that in the

issue of *The Times* for the very next day two more leaders appeared, the one entitled "Arbitration or Anarchy," and the other "Industrial Welfare." The first dealt with the parlous condition to which repeated strikes and defiance of the methods of conciliation and arbitration were bringing the Shipping Industry in Australia. The other took for its theme the Meeting of the Industrial Welfare Society at Oxford. There the principles adopted were: "That all work is public service; that employers, staff, and operatives are partners in industry, not antagonists; that welfare work is not mere benevolence but the best business; that capacity to produce depends upon the health and happiness of the workers; and that production keeps pace with the well-being of the employed."

It is impossible to suppose that these articles appeared side by side in such significant contrast by mere coincidence, and their juxtaposition is very suggestive of thought.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT EQUALITY OF INCOME WOULD MEAN TO WOMEN

Mr. Shaw suggests that on his "equality of income" basis, all genuine workers would be not only as well-off as but better-off than they are with things as at present arranged. Naturally this is a very attractive lure; almost an irresistible one, indeed, if he can verify and make it good. Whether we all ought to get more, and whether this is in fact the most desirable bait to hold out as a motive for change, is not the point we want to discuss at the moment. It is, at all events, a pleasing prospect, and we want to consider whether it is *true*, whether we should actually get more in return for our labours under his Socialist Government than we do now. It is probably true if by this is meant that the actual figures of our income might quite likely be larger. But Mr. Shaw is so acutely aware of the difference between Real and Nominal wages, that we may safely assume he does not mean anything so useless and unimportant as this. It is quite possibly true that certain classes of work would get a bigger share of actual and not merely nominal wealth than they do now, and that might or might not be a good thing. In many cases it would be an excellent thing! But when he asks us, you, me, everyone, to believe that we should *all* get more, and so appeals to our natural if not very commendable instincts of cupidity, we do

want to call all that intelligence with which Mr. Shaw credits us to our aid, even if it means the ungracious task of looking his gift horse in the mouth with very close attention.

I had better quote his actual words when he gives us an illustration of how he thinks things would happen, so that I may run no risk of misrepresenting him.

He says : " Let us pretend that if we all worked four hours a day for thirty-five years, each of us could live as well as persons with at least a thousand a year do now."

To this, if we are to speak honestly, there is only one answer, and that is that Mr. Shaw may pretend as much as he likes, but that it is only pretence, and could not possibly be realized if, in fact, everyone had equal incomes as he proposes. He himself does not stick to his thesis and explain and try to justify his pretence. He sheers off at once to enumerate various difficulties, some of which seem unreal and imaginary, such as those which might, he thinks, be raised by women protesting that in producing and bringing up children their toil could not be limited to four hours a day, and therefore they would be doing an unfair and disproportionate amount of the nation's work. Mr. Shaw need not worry about this. (I don't suppose he does really ! This is one of the occasions when one feels he really must have his tongue in his cheek !) He need not be afraid : these are not the sort of objections he will have to meet with from women. The duties of wife, mother, and home-maker are, of course, by universal consent, of infinitely more importance than any others which a woman can perform.

They are deserving of respectful recognition by everyone, and of material recognition by the Government when there is need. (That this is generally admitted now is shown by the bestowal of Widows' Pensions and Children's Allowances.) But they are not what most women mean when they speak of their work, and they would feel an instinctive repugnance to classing the two kinds of services under the same name. For the women's duties referred to by Mr. Shaw are natural functions, carried out in obedience to deeply ingrained human instincts, and women do not, as a rule, wish to measure the services they render their husbands and children, or calculate nicely the due amount of reward which they could claim.

But the real objection, which he does not meet, and which he does not even state, though it cannot have escaped his notice: the fallacy indeed which seems to vitiate his whole argument is this: *that there is no basis for any conception of what a thousand-a-year standard of life means, or a five-hundred-a-year standard, or any other figure you may like to name, EXCEPT THE BASIS OF INEQUALITY OF INCOME.* It may be a hard truth, but it is a demonstrable truth all the same, and not a pretence, that upon the foundation of inequality of possessions is built up everything that we mean when we speak of living as well or better than people of any given income do now. It is, of course, theoretically conceivable, though practically extremely doubtful, that *goods* might be produced as plentifully and supplied as cheaply under a Socialistic system of all-round equal division of incomes, as they are now; but it is *not* possible that the same *services* would be available.

Let us see how this would affect the average woman ; how it would react on the ordinary domestic family life which must always be her primary concern. As noticed above, it is amazing that Mr. Shaw should fail to do this, and incredible that he overlooked and omitted reference to it out of inadvertence ! Indeed, he does notice in a different connection only a couple of pages earlier, very truly and aptly, that the reason why women desire to be women of property is because property secures them the maximum of leisure. In other words, they can buy the services of other women to light their fires and cook their food and clean their rooms, and fill a hundred other useful offices for them. Just so. They can buy these things, which obviously constitute a large part of the thousand-a-year level of comfort, or even the level of a much smaller income than that, *because they can make it "worth the while," as we say, of other women to perform these duties by paying them, and—incomes being unequal—these other women are desirous of increasing their incomes.*

But what happens under Mr. Shaw's scheme ? We all have the same income, and therefore as far as innumerable services go the purchasing power of money ceases to exist. The plain fact is that it will be extremely difficult, and in many cases quite impossible, to devise any means of getting a great deal of the dull and dirty drudgery of everyday life done ; and that form of division of labour which has worked through "substitution of services," and which has been of infinite value in the world's economy, will become unworkable.

Why should a woman come in to char for another

woman if they are in exactly the same financial position ? Why should a kitchen-maid get up at six o'clock to have her employer's bath water hot at eight ? and so on and so forth ? It may indeed be true that she is naturally well fitted for this kind of work, and not at all fitted for the sort of work her employer does, and that therefore there are obvious advantages to production in the present arrangement. But it is natural that she should not feel this herself, since, whatever a person's capacities or limitations, no one really enjoys getting up early on a cold winter's morning, especially not to make things more comfortable for another woman ! She does it at present because she has a clear interest in doing it, and she does it not unwillingly if her employer's relations with her are as pleasant and friendly as they ought to be. But few will flatter themselves that she would continue to do it if both had a thousand a year !

It is true that if all houses were provided at the communal expense with continuous central heating for water, the particular service I have cited might be dispensed with in cities and large towns, though hardly in the country and in isolated houses. But it is, of course, only typical of a dozen others, which may and no doubt will be made less disagreeable and fatiguing by improved labour-saving devices, but which cannot be done away with, and must always be performed by someone. Mr. Shaw may say that all the services necessary for the nation's life—scavenging, drainage, etc.—will be done compulsorily under threats of legal pains and penalties, (and we will follow this up, and see what it would lead to, in another chapter), but it seems that *private services* of what are

rather offensively and absurdly called a menial nature, would naturally become unpurchasable, since it would be impossible to offer the extra reward which at present makes them readily performed.

If Mr. Shaw or anyone else thinks this is a loss that would only affect a few rich people, and is therefore negligible, and cannot be allowed to weigh in the argument, practical women will assure him, with what patience they may, that he is wrong ! Any hard-worked mother will tell him that what she most values in an increase of her husband's or her own salary is the power it gives her to hire a " mother's help," a girl to look after and take out the children, or a woman to help with the multifarious house chores. She rates this higher and puts it far before the purchase of extra luxuries of food or clothing. And she is right. For when you get past the basic necessities in these matters, the bare minimum needed for healthy and civilized life, it is services and not extra goods that count for most with women.

And most women particularly dislike a dead level ! Certainly they do not approve of things as they are, and would often wish to see many cast down from the seats of the mighty, and others exalted in their place. But it is true that, taken in bulk, their instinctive wish is for variety and not for uniformity They will always prefer to have the chance of rising, even if it means the risk of sinking ; always choose that there shall be something to strive for, even if also something to lose.

Let the issue be presented fairly and squarely, with

no misstatements or false suggestions. Let Mr. Shaw tell us, if he will, that it is our civic duty to give up all the services which unequal incomes enable us to enjoy, —our Christian duty to sacrifice our own comfort because it is based on the discomfort of others, and we will consider it. If he can convince us that our sacrifice of the amenities to which we are accustomed or to which we look forward will increase the general comfort,—I will not say that we shall be willing to make the sacrifice—women are just as selfish as men!—but I agree that we *ought* to be willing, and perhaps some of us would indeed be willing. But do not pretend that we shall be sacrificing nothing—on the contrary making rather a good bargain for ourselves! For that is both misleading and untrue!

CHAPTER V

EQUALITY OF WORK

Now let us turn to the other half of Mr. Shaw's proposition, the necessary complement to equal distribution of income—viz. equality of work. We may premise that most intelligent women are wholly in favour of everyone contributing their fair share in one way or another to the world's needs, whatever practical difficulties they may see in the way of bringing this about. They thoroughly disapprove of any class of men or women living in idleness, and if it is objected by Socialist critics that they ought not to acquiesce, without demanding a revolution in the fact that some do live in comfort and even in ostentatious luxury without making any contribution, they have their answer ready. It is for two reasons.

First, because they believe that these offenders are such a small percentage as not to be worth bothering about, numerically speaking. Most rich people do make valuable contributions, whether in managing their estates, or nowadays, in business, or in social and philanthropic work, and if they do not they are frowned upon with marked disapprobation by the better sort of their own class, from Royalty downwards. We grant, however, the lamentable fact that a certain number, small perhaps as a percentage of the whole population,

but not small in itself, and far from negligible because of the disastrous effect of their evil example, do live as drones and parasites. Why then do we acquiesce, and not promptly demand their heads upon chargers ? The answer can be made in one word : expediency ! We have not yet found any effective means of preventing inheritance of wealth, (we do restrict and regulate it pretty drastically by means of death duties !) without so checking the production of wealth as to do far more harm to the whole community than is done by the unworthiness of some of the inheritors. And we have found no satisfactory method of compelling these unworthy members to work, except the growth of a healthier public opinion which condemns them, and exposes them to ridicule and obloquy. Just as there are many " sins " which we deplore, but yet do not think it at all desirable to make into legal " crimes " and attempt to deal with under a penal code, so there is much social behaviour highly objectionable both ethically and economically, which we prefer to attack by the indirect methods of education than directly by Acts of Parliament. Apart from these considerations, we should endorse very heartily St. Paul's famous dictum (which Mr. Shaw, by the way, dismisses with a rather cheap gibe and irrelevant reference to the obvious fact that babies cannot be self-supporting), that : " If any will not work, neither shall he eat." Work for everyone is obviously the right and desirable thing, and, so long as it is not over-work, the happy thing.

But " equality of work " ? That is another matter. What does it mean exactly, and how is it to be established ? Mr. Shaw has himself asserted that it is quite

impossible to measure the respective *values* of the work done, or the respective *merits and efforts* of those who do it. As we have seen, he thinks that so bad and vicious that he will not try even to make approximate distinctions and proportion reward accordingly. Yet the work must be done, and in equity it should be shared equally, since the reward is to be equal. He is reduced therefore to making his calculations on a basis of *time*—the time, that is to say, spent on the work, whether efficiently or otherwise ; or, to look at the matter from the other end of the telescope, the time left free by the work and available for leisure. Mr. Shaw, as noted in a previous chapter, estimates the probable amount of labour necessary from each person, at four hours daily for a period of thirty-five years.

He is the first to realize the enormous difficulties of his thesis. Because without going into the tiresome imaginary difficulties which he supposes might be raised by women with regard to child-bearing and child-rearing, there are, evidently, innumerable trades, professions and labouring jobs which cannot be carried out on a " so-many-hour-a-day " basis. He himself instances sailors. Doctors also immediately occur to one's mind—especially gynæcologists. It is not conceivable that any surgeon or physician worth his salt will refuse to respond to a late call in an urgent case, on the ground that he has already performed his daily allotted quota of national work ! Still less that a doctor attending a woman in the pangs of child-birth will leave her in labour to be taken on by the next shift of medical attendants ! Sick nurses and children's nurses are also cases in point. Or, to take quite a different instance, consider Cabinet Ministers ! One trembles to

think of the results if the Foreign Secretary engaged on a vital dispatch to Washington or the Quai d'Orsay, conducted his diplomacy on the four hour a day principle!

Last but not least, think of the class for which Mr. Shaw is, perhaps not unnaturally, specially con siderate, viz. creative artists. In all such cases he frankly admits that his four hour a day calculation would obviously not work, but he suggests that the difficulty can be overcome by allowing these people who work independently and individually (not in mass with the help of power-driven machinery as in factories), to work full stretch for as many hours daily as seems desirable, or as they feel impelled and inspired to do, and then providing them with extra long holidays, always on the same income, to make up for their prolonged exertions.

This sounds perhaps plausible, and rather attractive, but it is clear that the difficulties of the responsible authority charged with the duty of adjudicating in these matters will be extraordinarily great. The problem of deciding whether a short spell of work at a high degree of mental intensity—or a longer one of steady devotion to humble drudgery—deserves a shorter or longer vacation, seems almost insuperable. It is very strange that Mr. Shaw, who is so keenly aware of the difficulties of fixing the money value of any given piece of work—so much so that he will not even attempt it, however roughly—does not seem to see that precisely the same difficulties exist in trying to fix and remunerate it in his new currency of holiday coupons, with a great many added complications to

boot! It appears entirely unworkable, and yet on this idea his whole scheme vitally depends.

Take the question of how we are to get the less attractive, the duller and more disagreeable tasks performed at all, when everybody is to be paid alike regardless of the nature of the work, or the supply of people capable of performing it, or of their own capacity and fitness. Of course the natural working of supply and demand will not regulate the matter as it does at present and fill these posts. No extra monetary reward can be given, nor indeed would it have any meaning or value where everyone's income was equal to start with, and no one was allowed to accumulate for the future. Mr. Shaw sees all this, but suggests as a simple and sufficient solution the offering of still shorter hours and still greater leisure to those who will perform the unpleasant and unpopular tasks. Thus, he seems to think, everything will be settled to everyone's satisfaction.

To others this will seem extraordinarily doubtful! It is easy to imagine that under a system of four-hours-a-day many people would be so bored, or even so appalled at the vast amount of leisure bestowed on them, with very little notion of how to fill it, that work would be at a premium and many would wish to bribe others to allow them to undertake their jobs. The difficulty under Mr. Shaw's Socialism, and fettered by his scheme, is to know what bribe or inducement could be offered! But certainly it is hard to think that the lure of still less employment and still more leisure would be effective. It could only tempt those who were so hopelessly lazy and congenitally unemployable

that they would hardly be fit performers of even those uninteresting and distasteful but still very arduous tasks which Mr. Shaw hopes they will undertake! Under our present system these jobs are undertaken simply because a man must earn his living somehow, and he is often only fit for low-grade employment, for which there is usually an over-abundant supply of candidates. It is very right and proper to argue that this heavy and sometimes repellent work, being necessary to the national welfare, should be honourably recognized and far better paid than it is now. But if all are to be paid alike, whatever the work and whatever their ability, it is not credible that many will consent to be placed on the less attractive jobs.

Mr. Shaw's knowledge of human nature seems at fault here. However obvious the inferiority of some to others may be in the eyes of the others, or indeed of impartial on-lookers; however clear their unfitness for anything but the simple services, hewing of wood and drawing of water, yet nobody's natural self-esteem will allow him to accept another man's judgment on such a point. He will bow to economic necessity without any wounded feeling, because that is impersonal and depends, or seems to depend, on a hundred vague causes beyond his control; but to be drafted for such and such employment regardless of one's own tastes, by some Tcheka or modern Committee of Public Safety (for it seems that some such institution would be necessary), would be deeply offensive. And if he refused obedience, what could be done? Suppose that Mr. Shaw's Public Authority, by whatever name it is called, desire A. or B. to become sewer-men (where they are wanted), and, the bait of less than the established

day's work not appealing to them, they decline ; but aver their perfect willingness to become shop-assistants (where they are not wanted) ; how does he propose to deal with them ? He says that refusal to perform necessary work will be treated as a crime, but people will claim the right to choose what kind of work they will perform, provided it can be shown to be reasonable and useful. Short of wholesale imprisonment at the public expense, which would scarcely help production ! it is hard to see what could be done.

Another difficulty ! Needless to say Mr. Shaw recognizes very fully (how could he of all men fail to do so !), that original brain-work—creative literary or artistic work, can, notoriously, only be performed when the divine inspiration comes. It must be waited for patiently, and the mood may have to be coaxed and humoured and induced. When it does arrive it must not be checked or interrupted. If it had to be put aside while the artist went off to do his " bit " of national work at the shop or factory or wherever it might be, when he returned to the abundant leisure he had earned, he would find his train of thought and delicately balanced argument all broken-up, the patiently-wooed inspiration vanished, and his whole nervous system so irritated with the sense of being baulked and baffled that it might take long to recover his mental serenity and recapture his elusive conceptions.

To this, I imagine, Mr. Shaw will retort impatiently, that of course the creative artist's work will be recognized as his national contribution, and that no one in his Socialistic Bureaucracy will be so stupid as to imagine that he could be dragged away to perform any

other task, or to interfere with his valuable labours in any way.

But this impales us sharply on the other horn of the dilemma. Who is to decide whether X's labours are or are not valuable ?—whether he is in fact a sufficiently good poet or playwright or philosopher or painter or sculptor, to make him rightly immune from the daily round of common tasks ? This is not a factious question, but one of the first practical importance. It is common knowledge that a high proportion of intelligent and talented young people of both sexes, and some who are neither very talented nor very intelligent, do believe firmly and quite sincerely that they are called to the high fellowship of this select and chosen band. It is not always a belief justified by facts. Just as in the war innumerable persons of no particular qualifications but with an ardent desire to serve their country in some way congenial to themselves, rushed forward with offers of assistance, and when questioned as to what they could do replied that they had peculiar gifts of organization, so, many (I had almost said most !) young women go through a phase of believing that they are destined to shine upon the dramatic or variety stage, and countless budding authors are convinced that they are the Aldous Huxleys and Edith Sitwells of a new generation ! At present this conviction does no particular harm to anyone, for the necessity for earning a living in most cases puts their talents to an acid test. If they cannot earn it by acting or writing they must choose some other way and follow their taste only as a hobby. Those who stick it out through the grinding difficulties of a would-be-author's life, without much or any private means, give the best credentials for the

genuineness of their gift. But in Mr. Shaw's Utopia there would be none of this harsh discipline, the drastic winnowing of wheat from chaff, which only the very elect are likely to survive. Everyone, we remember, would be paid the same for good work or bad, and, under these easy circumstances, the number of those who decided to take up a literary or artistic or musical career, would unquestionably increase enormously.

How would the nation deal with this difficulty? Mr. Shaw gives us no clue. Must we have a Central Bureau of Critics, responsible to the nation for examining the productions of all these would-be artists and authors, and deciding which of them might be "passed," and which rejected and told to take up humbler toil? And will there be an Appeal? For no one acquainted with passionate youth, especially youth inwardly convinced of possessing a valuable gift, will suppose that they will accept an unfavourable judgment lightly. The whole idea is a hideous nightmare, fraught with all the drawbacks and disadvantages that attend Censorships. For the National Critics would be no more infallible than any other critics, and the early work of those whom the whole world afterwards unites in acclaiming worthy, is often crude, showing little promise of its after-greatness. Even when it is indeed full of merit it often meets with nothing but abuse and obloquy, because it is unorthodox and ahead of its time. So our Central Bureau might, and probably would, turn down some genuine Shaw or Wells or Huxley or Sitwell, among the mass who deserved no better, and the world's loss would be incalculable. Mr. Shaw may say that our present unequal distribution starves out potential artists already, and there is some truth in

this, but not enough to outweigh the immense difficulties and disadvantages of his equal distribution. I think any genuine talent will prefer liberty to develop on its own lines, free from interference, even in the great poverty which Mr. Shaw would make penal, rather than accept the ghastly alternative of being examined, approved, and "licensed" so to speak by some Civic Inquisition, and granted its "dispensation" from other work. The vision suggests the most disquieting imaginations! Suppose an author's work was considered by the Bureau to fall below his earlier standard, would he be disqualified and forfeit his licence, and be sent to clean the Municipal drains? There is no end to the horrid possibilities if once the era of personal choice and personal liberty is done away with, fraught though it admittedly is with the certainty of hardship and struggle, and nine chances of failure to one of success.

But to return from this digression as to how particular classes of people would be affected, to Mr. Shaw's general idea for the maintenance of the future world, one cannot help wondering on what he has based his calculations, to arrive at his notion that four hours a day from all citizens would provide sufficient labour to produce a thousand-a-year standard of life for each! I confess I have no statistics myself on which to base a contrary calculation, but on the face of it the supposition seems wildly improbable. Admittedly one may hope that the continued discoveries of science and its application both to industry and domestic life, will enormously reduce effort, and the hours of toil, and increase our material amenities. May it come soon, if it does not destroy us all in the process, with the increased

pace and noise of life! But four hours a day is only half the normal working day already attained under even the most favourable conditions, and, alas! too many people are still working far longer than that, or than they ought, in the interests either of their own health or of their industrial efficiency. If their work is eventually to be reduced to fit Mr. Shaw's plans, it will mean that hundreds of millions of working hours annually are swept away from the nation's productive time-table. In addition, a vast army of women who do at present work long hours, would be, under Mr. Shaw's scheme, removed altogether from the labour market, so that they might devote all their time to their domestic duties as house-keepers, wives and mothers, which would be recognized as their national contribution. This would, from many points of view, be greatly to be desired, both eugenically and economically, but again it would obviously reduce the labour available for direct production to a tremendous extent, leaving more and not less for those remaining, in order even to keep up present standards. How, then, is the all-round standard to be so raised and improved as Mr. Shaw contemplates? The number of additional workers whom, it may be, he hopes to conscript from the ranks of the idle rich, cannot in the nature of things be large, since the chief Socialist complaint is always that such a negligible fraction of the population should draw such a large proportion of its revenues. They cannot have the argument both ways. On the other hand, if it is claimed that the wealth of the few super-rich would, when equitably distributed, level up the incomes of the poor to the desired standard, surely it has been computed by careful conscientious statisticians like Professor Bowley, that any such re-distribution of wealth

would only raise the all-round incomes by so few pounds a year that it would hardly affect the general standard of life at all, except by a levelling down process.

We are driven to the conclusion that though it is highly desirable, as well as a matter of personal honour, that every man and woman should work and give the best they are capable of, yet Equality of Work is a mythical conception impossible of realization. And further, that if by some miracle it could be realized and enforced in practice, there is no reason to suppose that production would be so increased as to give everybody the easy time all round which Mr. Shaw imagines. It seems more probable that the work required from each citizen, even to keep up the existing standard, much less to raise it, would be substantially heavier than it is now.

CHAPTER VI

LIBERTY V. EQUALITY

It strikes one in so many discourses on Socialism that its ideas are often ethically fine (though generally quite unsound economically); but that its knowledge of human psychology is almost always singularly defective. For instance, the calculation of the probable success of any Socialist programme seems to be based on the idea that, though it might be opposed by one-tenth of the population who are the "have's," it would carry with it the enthusiastic support of the nine-tenths who are "have not's." Probably this might be so at the first go off. A class of workmen earning at present £100 a year would naturally be much dazzled by Mr. Shaw's lure of the £1,000 a year level, and, supposing for a moment for the sake of argument that the brilliant promise could be performed, although they would find that £1,000 a year no longer meant anything in the least like what it means now, yet it is probable that they would find themselves materially better off. Let us leave on one side for a moment the question whether this state of things could continue, or whether under the new régime all production would not be doomed to decline, and the whole standard of life bound to be lowered. We will "pretend" as Mr. Shaw says, that all had gone and would go well; the bloodless revolution safely accomplished, and equality of nominal income, anyway,

an accepted fact. But how long would it be before the new generations resented—not unnaturally—the arbitary limitations imposed upon them, and wanted to know by what ethical justice, or what economic good sense, a bad and idle carpenter was paid as much as a capable and industrious one ?

But, if we are considering reasonable probabilities and not fantastic dreams, how long could the new high standard of universal all-round comfort and increased wealth go on ? or how indeed could it ever come into existence ? Another strange assumption made by many Socialists is that there will be the same good management, careful economy, and diligent labour—or rather a higher degree of all these qualities—without any strong personal motive as a stimulus. Now it is true and may be gladly acknowledged, that there are people, saints and heroes, whose stimulus and strong motive is not one of personal advantage, but a spiritual motive : it is the service of God and their neighbour. Let us be thankful for them : it is they who lead the race up towards the stars. If we know with shame that we cannot walk with them upon the heights and breathe the rare air which they breathe, being as yet on a lower and more material plane, let us at least see to it that on that low plane we labour faithfully and honestly, act up to what we know to be our duty, and make our fair contribution, not only to our own private and family welfare, but to that of the Commonwealth. But do not, for Heaven's sake, let us have meaningless phrases and false pretences, assuming what we do not really believe. We know very well that whatever may be the case in years to come, when man has grown nearer the divine, as things are at present you do not

and cannot get the mass of average human beings to work as hard or as well, unless they derive some direct personal or family advantage from their efforts.

" Till we are built like angels, with hammer and chisel and pen
We will work for ourself and a woman, for ever and ever, Amen ! "

This is the rock foundation of psychological fact which underlies all schemes of Payment by Result, Bonuses on Output, Profit-sharing, etc. They all need careful watching and safeguarding, to prevent abuse, but the justification for them all is that they are indeed founded on a rock. To work for the sake of profit is not so noble an aim as to work for the sake of service : it is not the highest principle, but—it answers ! It is as vain to try and run industry on principles which are far ahead of the common spiritual level, as it is to make Criminal or Civil Laws which do not carry with them the goodwill and consent of the mass of people whom they affect. Laws are unenforceable without this consent and co-operation, and become a dead letter. Yet Socialists persist in talking as if human nature were entirely different to what it manifestly is. Do not mistake me here, my dear sisters, I beg of you, and imagine I am one of those smug and silly persons who talk about human nature never changing ! As if the most remarkable and hopeful and outstanding feature of human nature were not that it is changing all the time, and never stands still ! But it does not change suddenly, by a cataclysm " in our time " or any other time, but slowly and imperceptibly, as a grain hidden in the earth which may grow to a great tree bearing much fruit. Even so, however much you prune and train it, and improve the fruit it bears, it can only grow after its kind !

But the psychological point on which Socialists seem to go more astray than on any other, is that of Liberty ! Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, was the war-cry of the French Revolutionists ; a very fine cry and a very good political programme if it meant more Liberty, and more Equality, and a vast deal more Fraternity ; but manifestly a wild and utterly impracticable dream if it were to be taken literally, and mean an absolute realization of these three ideals. Do you ask why ? It is because the three things are mutually incompatible and cannot live together ; though the spirit of fraternity can live with either of the other two, or indeed, though hardly pressed and suffering, even where both the other two are sadly absent.

You cannot have Equality at all in one sense, because it is quite plain and apparent that Nature knows nothing of it and will have none of it. Man is born unequal, as all who are not stone blind can see ; one with a fine brain, a good constitution and a genial temper, while his brother or sister has the very reverse of all these good gifts. And man remains unequal despite all we can do to improve his environment ; unequal physically and mentally and spiritually. You may, and you ought, to strain every nerve to remove artificial and unnecessary inequalities, and to give as far as possible to every human being that equality of opportunity to develop himself within the limits of his natural capacities which Mr. Shaw declares to be absurd and chimerical ; but that will not make them equal, and neither will equality of income, if such a fantasy could be realized in practice. It will not be realized, not so much because of practical and mechanical difficulties, even though these appear so formidable as

to be insuperable, but because of the deep-rooted antagonism to the idea, which is instinctive in human beings. The under-dog may think he wishes it while he is the under-dog, but no longer. It is a basic human tendency to crave for scope and space and freedom in which to rise as high as one has the power of rising, and it is another deep-seated instinct to wish to mark with outward signs, symbols and ceremonies, gifts or honours, the triumphant rising above the ordinary dead level. Nothing which does away with these things, and tries to preserve an artificial uniformity in rank or wealth will, I am convinced, be generally welcome. Women, in particular, as was noticed in an earlier chapter, have a strong intuitive sense of the importance and necessity of a hierarchy. They desire strongly, indeed, that the ladder should not be fenced about and reserved for a fortunate few, they want all careers more and more open to all the talents, regardless of sex, class or money, and they believe that this ideal can be, and is slowly being accomplished. But they have no desire that when this equality of opportunity, educational and other, has been achieved, all should get an equal reward, whether they have used their opportunities or buried them in the ground.

Now as to Liberty ; it is very well recognized that absolute individual liberty is impossible, because the right to liberty of one person must necessarily and in common equity be limited by the equal right to liberty of other persons. My liberty to rise as high as I can must obviously be subject to the condition that in the process I must not injure others. To accomplish this end, and check an unbridled liberty from degenerating into selfish licence, have been all the Law

and the Prophets ! And it is evident that a great deal more preaching and prophesying and very considerable additions to the law will be necessary before it is perfectly attained. But it still remains true that liberty is the thing all human creatures crave most for, and that the problem of the State is to secure to every individual the greatest possible measure of liberty compatible with social justice. Only in this way can citizens enjoy full health and happiness, attain their full growth, and make their full contribution to the whole. Now, you cannot have liberty if you attempt to enforce equality, whether financial or of any other kind, because if a man or woman of good abilities be free, he or she will not long consent to remain on a level with those of inferior capacities. Nature forbids it, and it is only by arbitrary restrictions—the frank denial of all liberty—that you can enforce it or the outward semblance of it.

But fraternity you can and do have, despite all differences of class or creed or capacity, as has been proved by the thousand brotherly devotions between rich and poor, gentle and simple, clever and stupid, on the battle-fields of France and Flanders, and, in peace time, in clubs and playing-fields, in churches and chapels, in schools and colleges. All born brothers are not equal, and do not pretend to any such humbug and absurdity, but they can care for each other and be loyal to each other in spite of that, as most happy families know. It should be so in Industry and Commerce, too. Already there are signs of it, and it will come nearer with every triumph of good will and sympathy and sacrifice over ignorance and selfishness and misunderstanding. But it will not

be brought nearer by attempted enforcements of unnatural equality and restriction of reasonable liberty, for these things are alien to natural impulses, and to desires which are not in themselves evil, and which will not be overruled.

CHAPTER VII

ABOUT SAVING

It seems to many people, though they see it and say it with infinite reluctance and regret, that we are faced with the stern and painful probability of a lowered rather than a raised standard of general comfort, until the destruction of wealth caused by the War has been completely overtaken, and other adverse factors overcome, by increased production, less luxurious spending and more saving. Mr. Shaw, however, will not hear of saving. It seems like a red rag to a bull to him in his thirty-third chapter, and he condemns it as being both undesirable and impossible. We had better take these mutually exclusive arguments separately.

What does Mr. Shaw mean when he says saving is impossible, in face of the manifest fact which he so deeply deplores, namely that the very foundation of the Capitalism he detests is the spare money saved and owned by private individuals, after they "have bought everything needed to keep them becomingly in their station of life"? (see page 128). The argument does not seem to amount to more than words, but I give it for what it is worth.

What, he says, is money, whether in the form of

notes, coins, cheques, or what not ? " These things are only legal claims to the goods we need," (Mr. Shaw always omits the services !) " chiefly food." But the food will not keep, it will go rotten. Therefore the Intelligent Woman, realizing that " money means the things that money can buy and that the most important of these things are perishable, will see that money cannot be saved ; it must be spent at once."

One cannot help wishing sometimes that Mr. Shaw's treatise had been written more after the Socratic method, and that his Intelligent Woman, instead of being assumed ready to act the part of a Greek chorus of approval, had occasionally been permitted to interpolate some questions of her own. Questions, that is to say, dealing with real difficulties, instead of the imaginary ones which serve merely as Aunt Sallies for his wit. Perhaps this would be to expect too much, but he might at least have amplified and explained his very surprising assertion quoted above. Instead, he hurries off into a diatribe about the (very real) dangers of inflation of currency and consequent depreciation in the value of money, and concludes that because this *may* happen, and, if it does, will undoubtedly cause loss, therefore all saving is useless and unsafe.

Not having to hold our own tongues, however, like the lady to whom his " Guide " was originally addressed, we shall have a thing or two to say about all this.

In the first place, though it is true, and indeed a platitude, that money is not itself wealth but a legal claim to wealth (i.e. all the goods and services we need which have an exchange value), yet it is not

true that we spend directly a much greater proportion of these claims on our own perishable food, rather than on other comparatively lasting things. Evidently, if we did not first satisfy our primary need for food, we should perish, and have no earthly wants of any kind left. Nobody, I imagine, disputes this! But it will be found in most families that rent, rates and taxes, clothing, fuel, light and amusement, and, in better-off households, education and service, account for a larger amount than actual food. Where it is not so, evidently the people concerned are "poor people," according to Mr. Shaw's definition of poverty as "not having enough to live on," and therefore saving would, of course, be out of the question for them. We have thought it right to point this out to prevent a very easy misunderstanding, but we do not mean that Mr. Shaw is not correct when he argues that, ultimately, all expenditure on goods and services of whatever kind is really spent on the maintenance of those who produce these goods and services, and that means, very largely, on their food. That is perfectly true. But the essential point to notice with regard to saving is the surplus! No saving, clearly, would be possible, if people only produced sufficient for bare maintenance, but this is not the case. There is always a surplus, and that surplus may either be consumed or saved for future production.

The next point to notice is Mr. Shaw's statement that saving is seen to be impossible if you reduce it to terms of food (the underlying essential wealth), because food will not keep, and therefore cannot be saved up. Surely this is a singularly unhappy illustration! For the stock example of all economists,

when they are urging the necessity and duty of saving, stressing that this can only be done by increased effort or by abstinence, and pointing out how it has, actually, been done from the earliest and most primitive times, in this very same matter of food. They ask you to notice that if all the corn were ground into flour and eaten as bread, and no seed corn saved, there could be no harvest next year. If all the eggs were made into omelettes and consumed, and no clutch saved for the hen to sit on, poultry would cease entirely to exist, and we should soon have neither eggs nor chickens to eat. And the same with seed potatoes, and practically all the crops and animals on which we depend for sustenance. Therefore we conclude that Mr. Shaw is wrong in fact, even as to his own chosen instance, and that it is not only possible but imperatively necessary to save food !

Even as regards the food which is destined simply for consumption, and not capable of being used as reproductive capital, it is not so rapidly perishable as Mr. Shaw suggests. Grain properly stored keeps good for a long time, and modern methods of refrigerating and sealing up in air-tight vessels, combined with a judicious use of preservatives, enable vast quantities of fruit, vegetables, fish, poultry and butcher's meat to be kept in a perfectly good and wholesome condition, sent round the world if desired and back again, and saved for long periods.

The really vital flaw in Mr. Shaw's argument, however, is that he speaks as if money were only a legal claim to goods actually existing in the present, instead of, as is of course the case, to goods that will

come into existence in the future. We are at a loss to know why he should think it worth while to darken counsel with such meaningless squibs and crackers in one chapter, when in the very next he proceeds to explain, what indeed most people know very well already, the undeniable fact that by saving our spare money and lending it to someone who needs it for immediate use, we can bargain for its return, plus payment for the use of it, which is called interest, at the end of the year. Then we can either lend it again or spend it on any goods and services that may at that time have become available. This is the whole meaning of investment, and the underlying principle of it from the individual point of view is, that people can, by saving, by preferring to do without something in the present, be enabled to provide for the needs of the future, whether their own needs, or the needs of their children, or of their business, or of their pet charity.

Mr. Shaw, indeed, is very sound as to the necessity of accumulating large Capital, and takes pains to show that Socialists are not such fools as to fail to recognize this, but on the contrary appreciate it fully. He says, in fact (p. 133), that " there is no other way : " (my Socialist sisters, do please note !) and that : " In this respect it makes no difference whether we vote for Capitalism or Socialism. The process is one of natural necessity which cannot be changed by any political revolution nor evaded by any possible method of social organization." The thing he objects to, and is of course perfectly entitled to object to, is that Capital should be in private hands, instead of, as he would wish, nationalized. This is a highly controversial but

very interesting and arguable point of view, and it is well worth hearing what Mr. Shaw has to say about it. But one does wonder what the object of the preceding excursions and alarums can have been ! Surely he cannot have wished so to muddle the minds of his readers, whether male or female, as to give them the impression that he approved of thoughtless extravagant spending—a course of action to which few of us need any incentive !

At all events, one thing emerges from the chapters in which he inveighs against the evils of private Capitalism, often with eloquence, and sometimes with truth. (Such evils, I mean, as the investing it in the production of luxuries for the few which will pay high dividends, rather than on the necessities of the many which may pay less ; or the sending it abroad for the same reason, when it is needed at home. All these, by the way, seem excellent arguments for that mixture of Public and Private Capital and Public and Private Enterprise which actually exists.) The emerging point is that Mr. Shaw knows his remark as to the impossibility of saving to be a mere verbal quibble. He makes it abundantly clear that he realizes as much as any man or any woman can do that it is not only a possibility but a fact, and not only a fact but a sheer necessity, if the populations of the world are to be kept alive. We can turn therefore to his second argument, that saving is undesirable, and see what that, in its turn, amounts to.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME PERSONAL ASPECTS OF SAVING

THRIFT has become the Cinderella of the virtues! Indeed, she is not only neglected, but treated with contumely, as if she were one of the ugly sisters! She and Respectability are scoffed at as the bourgeois virtues, and it must be admitted that they lack the lovely graces and attractions of Generosity, Hospitality, and Charity. Yet I think the time has come to put in a plea for their rehabilitation in popular esteem. If we might re-christen them, and call them Sister Carefulness and Brother Wise-Prudence and Aunt Forethought and Mother Self-Respect, (that self-respect which will not permit itself to be a charge and burden on others, nor to flout good manners and good conduct!) then Thrift and Respectability might come into their own again! The truth is that we cannot do without them. They are two of the primary social virtues. We may resent such homely proverbs as "Waste not, want not," "Half a loaf is better than no bread," "Be just before you are generous," "Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves," "Handsome is as handsome does," and a score of others which leap to Victorian memories; but nevertheless they are the garnered wisdom of long experience, and the foundation of an independent position in life. And independence cannot be scoffed at!

The human heart leaps at the thought of it and declares unalterably that it is worth winning, both for ourselves and for those we love. Not the most ardent idealist will deny or despise it. But most people do not inherit it. They earn it only by effort and sacrifice—by the practice, indeed, of the homely virtue of Thrift !

It is very true, as Mr. Shaw convincingly points out, that a poor person (defining a poor person as one who has not enough to live on), " cannot save and ought not to try." That is sheer common sense. Economy is wise spending, and until a woman and her family have sufficient food, shelter and clothing, it is manifest folly, even if it is not a crime, to try to save. Let us grant this freely. But it is doubtful whether this saving by people who ought not to attempt it, is really a serious danger. Natural instincts and appetites fight too strongly against it. A far more real danger is that the habit of living from hand to mouth and spending every available penny (so naturally and inevitably contracted in great poverty) becomes ingrained, and continues long after there is no poverty to make it necessary, or desirable, or even excusable.

An illustration as an instance of this ! Not long ago, in the course of my work, I came across a nice lad of about eighteen, who was arrested for stealing—what ? A loaf of bread ! Most pitiful and tragic, for, after all, no one steals bread from any sinister ulterior motive, but only for one urgent reason—hunger. There was no doubt about it in the case of this poor boy. He had gone very short for several days before he yielded to temptation, kept alive by odd crusts and cups of tea given him by kindly folks. But how had

he come to be in such a parlous state? Inquiry revealed—indeed he stated himself with commendable frankness—that he had not been one of the "down and outs," unskilled and chronically unable to get work. No, he had been, after various preliminary situations, employed for over a year as a vegetable cook in one of the more famous of our West End hotels, earning £2 10s. a week, and all found. He had no dependents and no claims upon him of any kind. Neither (in his favour, be it said!) had he any vicious tastes to empty his pockets. Nevertheless, every single penny of his weekly wages had been spent as he received them; chiefly on clothes, which he owned were his great extravagance, but also, I dare say, partly in treating his friends in the generous fashion which is the attractive custom of his class. He had never thought of putting by a penny for the proverbial rainy day, or considered the future at all. One day a row with a fellow worker at the hotel, culminating in blows, led to their both being "fired" at the shortest notice. It was the end of the season, when hotel work was slack, and he soon experienced the difficulty of getting fresh employment at his own skilled job. In addition he lost his stamped insurance cards (quite a common occurrence this, for the carelessness of many of these lads is almost incredible) and the difficulty and trouble of explaining the matter and getting it put right at the Unemployment Exchange put that quite out of the range of practicalities from his point of view. It was not very long before he found himself in such a predicament that the only very obvious alternatives were to steal or to starve. No one will judge harshly his choice of the first! But I did blame in unmeasured terms the thoughtless folly which had prevented him

from saving when he was in a position to do so. If he had put by even a few shillings a week, which could have been done without hardship, or even great self-denial, he need never have been exposed to such a temptation. And his case could be multiplied by hundreds—by thousands!

Let no one suppose, however, that it is only, or chiefly, in the working classes, so-called, that this reckless lack of forethought and thrift prevails. Extravagant habits spread quickly from class to class, and the wealthier classes must bear the responsibility of setting the fashion. "Shadow desires," as Professor Urwick used to call them, obsess the minds of multitudes who crave, not for necessary food and clothing for themselves and their children, but for the luxuries and silly prettinesses which are dangled before their eyes in every shop. Very natural and human—yes! Few women can afford to throw stones or plume themselves on superior sense! But Mr. Shaw's plea that they are wisely spending their all on primary bodily needs, and that saving would therefore be supremely undesirable, really will not hold water. Exactly the same applies when a young man in business or professional circles prefers to spend all his salary and save none of it. The glass of Burgundy with his lunch, the cigar after dinner, are not evil things, quite the contrary if he is able to afford them; the "good time" and abundant frocks and hats on which the girl spends her money are also perfectly natural and understandable; but at the same time they are indefensible either as a moral or a business proposition, if the spending means that any stroke of ill-fortune, such as may happen to us all—illness or

accidental loss of a job, for instance—will reduce the spender to destitution or to falling back on someone else for support. It is the old fable of "*La Cigale et la Fourmi*"!

The feeling against thrift has gone so far as to engender a vague feeling that there is something mean and contemptible about it. Literature is not quite innocent in this matter! People remember that Charles Surface the spendthrift was a very jolly, open-hearted, attractive fellow, and that Joseph Surface, the prudent cousin, was a vile humbug as well as a miser! But there is no logic that compels these arbitrarily associated qualities to go together! Perhaps Sheridan had a pardonable fellow-feeling for the spendthrift, and a natural wish to place him in a favourable light and endow him with virtues not properly belonging to him! But we cannot allow the imputation to pass unchallenged. People even have a vague idea that the principles of religion are unfavourable to saving, and quote "Sufficient unto the day," and "Take no thought for the morrow" as a plea for selfish extravagance, and without troubling to consider the context, and the real lessons which were being taught. This is no place in which to embark on religious discussion, and the quoting of disconnected texts is very much to be deprecated, but it may safely be said for the reassurance of those who are made genuinely uneasy by such quotations, that there is nothing in Scripture to condemn prudent forethought and carefulness (the parable of the wise and foolish virgins would suggest quite the reverse), though much to condemn *anxious* thought and worry, or care for material things at the expense of spiritual things.

The right interpretation of the great religious sayings of the world is of the first importance in modern life, and that they cannot all be taken literally is evident. Otherwise, since the Master had not where to lay His head, and we are taught to follow Him and make Him our pattern in all things, we should be logically compelled to believe that we ought to have no houses, and that our whole housing campaign for the poor was on wrong lines. Also that poverty was a blessed thing, and not a thing to be fought against with all the power of our free will, and got rid of as soon as possible, so as to help the building of Jerusalem " in England's green and pleasant land," and to make the coming of God's Kingdom nearer. We do not believe these things, which would manifestly be against our spiritual common sense. And in the same way we have to consider the arguments for and against saving, and its effect on character, without sentiment and in a sane, balanced manner. Surely Mr. Shaw mistake the whole question in its individual aspect, when he suggests (page 130) that no saving is ever accomplished until every appetite is satisfied. Saving, he says, means accumulating and investing spare money. But, if the owner " wanted anything it would buy, it would not be spare money." The implication is clear —that only when every personal desire is gratified, does anyone think of saving. So stated, saving indeed seems unworthy and contemptible and a very cheap virtue ! But it is not a true implication. It is profoundly untrue according to general human experience. There are few of us who could not quote from our personal experience not one but many instances of people, not poor in the sense of not having enough to live on, but poor nevertheless in the sense of having

such moderate means that it is impossible for them "to buy all the things they want," who yet do save. They are quite unable to gratify all their desires—they have to select and choose between them. Shall they spend now, and have some pleasure, some luxury in the present, or shall they forgo their own ease to safeguard the future—their own, or, still more, that of well-beloved children and grandchildren? When they answer that question in the unselfish, self-denying spirit, as so many do, who shall pour scorn on them?

It may be said that this personal side of saving is a small matter, and does not affect the main question which concerns us, because the bulk of national saving is not affected by small personal economies and sacrifices, but by the "reserves" of great companies, and the superfluous incomes of very rich people. These, being unable to spend all their lavish money, can only save and invest it, without any virtue or merit, because, short of giving it away, there is simply nothing else to be done with it! This may be true, so far as the *direct* effect of small personal savings on the national finances is concerned, though still they are by no means negligible, even in this respect, as the sales of War Certificates and the Savings Bank returns show. But the *indirect* effect is far greater. This is easily seen if the number of people are considered who—the reverse side of the edifying picture we have contemplated—do *not* exercise any prudent self-denial, but come on the rates and have to be maintained at the public expense, when a little common forethought would have tided them over the day of misfortune and kept them self-supporting. But, apart from all actuarial calculations, and far beyond any

material loss to the nation that can be added up in cold figures, is the loss of character and self-respect incurred by the habit of never looking ahead, and leaving it to others to undertake the maintenance which should have been a personal responsibility. This is not only an individual failure and degradation, but a most serious matter to the whole nation, converting sons and daughters who should have been assets into liabilities, mere consumers and not producers.

When all is said and done, it remains true that the self-respecting person is the self-supporting person Those who have won their independence can spend it in the service of the world, but until then they are only parasites living on, and indulging their finer feelings at the expense of others. No talk about the evils of Capitalism can do away with the primary duty of self-maintenance, which would remain the same under any reasonable social system. And to those who desire to be good citizens, the little humble virtue, our sister Thrift, will always be the indispensable hand maid !

So we come to the conclusion that Mr. Shaw was not only wrong when he declared that saving was, theoretically speaking, impossible, but was also wrong when he suggested that in the main it was, for the bulk of the people, individually undesirable. Apart from the net result to the national finance, we believe it to be of immense value in the formation of individual character.

CHAPTER IX

PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

ONE of the most interesting and important speculations aroused by Mr. Shaw's " Guide " is the question of how he imagines that " equality of real material subsistence " could be maintained, even if his " equality of income " were an achieved fact

He is careful to warn us in the earlier part of his book (see p. 102) against those who mislead the foolish and ignorant by falsely maintaining that Socialists are against personal possessions. Not at all, he assures us. They are not so absurd, but recognize perfectly well that personal possessions are indispensable, and, far from wishing to do away with them, desire a vast increase of them. The Socialist aversion is to a private ownership of land or capital, that is of the means of production. This ownership does, evidently, give to some people the power to employ others in production, and the fact results that some have a greater share of wealth than others.

This is, of course, the supreme evil in Socialist eyes, the grand abuse. *Not that some do not have enough,* which is a state of things that no one can or ought to contemplate with equanimity, *but that all do not have alike,* which to many of us seems reasonable, and

inevitable! Leaving this difference of opinion on one side for the moment, however, let us see how equal division of income will affect the matter. It is quite probable, many people think certain, that it will greatly reduce the total production of wealth, so that the amount to be shared out will grow less, and the nation as a whole be poorer all round, and this is bad! But certainly it does seem as if it would do away with the desperately poor and destitute class, and this is good! Or at least it would be good if it could last, and did not rapidly lead to a worse state than the first in which everyone would be on the poverty line! What seems quite clear, however, is that *it would not and could not prevent one person having more than another, for more than a very short time!*

How can this be so? you may ask, when we have seen that Mr. Shaw is quite prepared to have a drastic penal code preventing anyone from saving and investing and therefore gradually increasing his income? It is because, if you allow personal possessions, and purchase and sale, as Mr. Shaw does, though you may limit the cash income it is quite impossible to prevent the accumulation of real material wealth. In his chapter on the "Limits to Communism" he has pointed out that you cannot, for various excellent reasons, serve out equal shares of material things to everyone. Some approve of one class of goods and services, while others strongly disapprove and condemn them, and will flatly refuse to be taxed in order to supply them. But apart from conscientious objections, the difference of personal tastes and needs comes in. As he truly points out, if one woman wants a gramophone and another a pet dog, it is unjust to decide in favour of gramophones

for all and pet dogs for none, or pet dogs for all and gramophones for none: obviously, however, it is ludicrous waste of money to keep up your fetish of equality by duplicating and providing both gramophones and dogs for all who do and don't want them. "There is only," he says, "one way out of this difficulty. Instead of giving people *things* you must give them *money*, and let them buy what they like with it."

Yes, this is all very sensible, though somewhat obvious, as every intelligent woman will agree, but how is it possible that Mr. Shaw has overlooked the fact that he has cut right at the roots of his "permanent equality of material subsistence"? I am always chary of supposing that Mr. Shaw has really overlooked anything, but it does seem difficult to get away from his very precise assertions in his chapter on "Positive Reasons for Equality." There he expressly considers the possibility of rich and poor classes reappearing even if all were given the same money, and dismisses it as the parrot-like cry of the thoughtless person. He states: "You may take it with the utmost confidence as settled by practical experience that if we could succeed in distributing income equally to all the inhabitants of the country, there would be no more tendency on their part to divide into rich and poor than there is at present for postmen to divide into beggars and millionaires. . . . Equal distribution is, then, quite possible and practicable, not only momentarily, but permanently."

Well, millionaires and beggars are rather extreme instances of rich and poor. It may be granted that postmen will not have much opportunity of rising

to the former, nor, we hope, sinking to the latter extreme. But when Mr. Shaw asserts further that "The rule is that workers of the same rank and calling are paid alike, *and that they neither sink below their condition nor rise above it,*" we must flatly disagree. All the facts seem to contradict his assertion. It is *not* "a most exceptional thing" for a man to rise above his condition, and move into a rank and calling which are better paid than the one in which he originally worked, but quite a common one. Doubtless it is unusual for him to reach the very top of the tree, as when the office boy becomes the managing director of a great company, though even that sometimes happens and always may happen. (It is just that power of emerging from the rut and rising higher, which, as we have seen, gives its permanent charm and stimulus to a system of free competition.) But it is not true to experience to state that two persons who are paid alike, generally remain in the same financial position year by year. If Mr. Shaw's two postmen are in the very humblest grade of their service they may be not so far removed from the class of "poor persons" but that they will really need to spend all their income on the purchase of elementary necessities; and though, even at the lowest rate, there will be a difference in real wealth and well-being according as to whether the income has been wisely, or wastefully, disbursed, yet it may be claimed truly that, as to money, they do both remain as they were. But when they are on Mr. Shaw's thousand-a-year level the position will no longer be the same. Does Mr. Shaw really believe that two professional men with the same income, or, for that matter, two of the idle rich, are necessarily or even usually in the same

position as to funds at the end of the year? Surely the reverse is notoriously the case! One has made his talent earn ten talents more, and the other has squandered it! The same would be the case even when the accumulation and investment of money were forbidden, though no doubt it would be more difficult, and fortunes would not be on the same scale.

Think out how it would happen in practice. "Let us pretend," as Mr. Shaw would say, that we are all starting at scratch, with an equal income of, for the sake of argument, a thousand a year. We have seen that it will not buy personal services and amenities as at present, but still, admittedly, it will buy goods. Mr. Shaw allows us to do this, and to buy whatever we like, good or bad, wise or foolish! For this remaining liberty we are truly thankful to him. It gives us a loophole of escape from the intolerable monotony of his dead level of equality. But see what results! Some will buy solid stuff with a lasting value, good furniture, works of art, beautifully bound books, while others will spend their cash on cocktails and night clubs, ephemeral frocks, joy-rides and, generally speaking, the passing show. Please notice, my sisters, that this is said in no spirit of puritanical criticism and condemnation. To each one her own nature and habits, and it is far better to be honest and get real enjoyment out of a bal masqué or a good dinner, than to profess a taste not really felt, and spend money on a world-classic that leaves one cold! At the same time it is impossible not to realize that at the end of the year one woman will have acquired a great deal of real solid wealth, while the other will have nothing in

hand—except perhaps pleasant memories, which I am very far from despising !

Now I am not clear from Mr. Shaw's book whether he would permit private citizens to have a free right of buying and selling among themselves, or whether they would only be allowed to buy in the State shops, and, having made a purchase there, have to stick to it for life, unless they destroyed it ! It seems hardly possible that such a preposterous condition could be made, still less enforced; but the Inspector of Equal Incomes, who would certainly have to do a great deal of inquisitorial business, might conceivably require a certificate that no profit had been made on any private re-sale. Or there might be an edict that, if it had, the amount would be deducted from the next weekly or monthly payment of citizen-salary. It is only necessary to imagine these situations to see how silly and unworkable the whole notion is ! But, if all sale, except by authorized State stores, were in fact forbidden, it would still seem impossible to prevent exchange and barter between private individuals. Yet even this might seriously disturb the delicate balance of equal wealth ! And, even without such sales and exchanges, the person who had acquired a houseful of useful and beautiful objects would evidently be much richer when the next year's incomes were paid, than her sister who had nothing in hand, having spent all this year's income on passing pleasures. The latter would now have to pay for the hire of many daily necessaries, or desirabilities, which the former would own as permanent personal possessions. There is nothing, for instance, to suggest that Mr. Shaw would have any objection to one of his citizens purchasing a motor-car, or a

vacuum cleaner, a sewing machine, or any elaborate electric contrivance which might be invented in the future to save time or labour. On the contrary, one can only suppose he would applaud. If his equal incomes did not run to a figure which would enable people to buy such luxuries straight out, paying down the full amount (which seems highly probable), still there would be nothing to prevent a careful person acquiring one or all of them on the instalment system. I do not know if our liberty would extend to allowing us to acquire our own houses or gardens, but certainly furniture must rank as a permissible personal possession. It is easy to see that if equality of wealth and condition is necessary to content and happiness, there would very soon be no equality, and just as much unhappiness and discontent, not to speak of envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness, as ever! People can be as envious of a chesterfield or a grand piano as of a difference of income! And only a curious ignorance of average human nature can suppose that the envy will be assuaged by the reasonable reflection that they also could have had the chesterfield and grand piano if they had chosen so to expend their money. It is a chronic grievance of the human heart that one cannot eat one's cake and have it too. Mr. Shaw thinks that equal incomes will cause the real merit to emerge and shine all the more brightly, and there is a certain truth in that. But it is very unlikely that those who "take with shame the lower place" will enjoy the position any more because it is demonstrably due to their own faults of character. The present system lends a kindly curtain to human frailty, because our failure always *may* have been due to outside circumstances and not to our own inadequacy. It is very few who

have the courage and clear-sightedness to say to themselves :

> " The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars
> But in ourselves that we are underling."

Aldous Huxley showed profound psychological insight when he made his delightful tailor, Mr. Bojanus, point out to his client, Mr. Gumbril, that it is not rich people but " the Best People " that the other people resent ! —their habits, speech and education. But can such superiorities and inferiorities, and the resulting jealousies, ever be done away with ? Mr. Shaw thinks —or says—yes ; that they are all a mere matter of money, and that if there were no financial difference between classes, all the cultural and traditional differences would quickly disappear. It may be so, but you would still have the personal differences, and a new aristocracy of merit would inevitably arise. Mr. Shaw would no doubt agree that this would and should be so, but it is difficult to believe that the distinction could be kept a purely personal one, and that the aristocratic halo would not extend to the families of the distinguished individuals. In that event it would be a case of *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

All this, however, is a digression from our main theme in this chapter, which is to point out the incompatibility of Mr. Shaw's two ideas. The full right to acquire personal possessions, to exchange, sell, give or bequeath them, is, indeed, compatible with many theories of Socialism, though not with the conception of Communism, which demands that literally all things should be owned and shared in common. But emphatically it is *not* compatible with Mr. Shaw's

system of equal incomes and equality of material subsistence. Yet he will have no compromise about that. On p. 94 he declares his passionate conviction that equality of material subsistence is the first condition of establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. " Whoever has reached this conclusion, by whatever path, is a Socialist ; and whoever has not reached it is no Socialist, though he or she may profess Socialism or Communism in passionate harangues from one end of the country to the other, and even suffer martyrdom for it."

Mr. Shaw's assertion that " the Communism of Christ, of Plato, and of the great religious orders " all take his conclusion for granted, is highly controversial. I do not accept it, but this is not the place, and I am not the person, to take up the challenge and engage with him in religious argument.

You, my Socialist sisters, will probably take exception to Mr. Shaw's next remark : " Now you know what Socialism is " ! You may feel that this is a matter still allowing of different opinions ! But at least we know what the gospel of Socialism according to Saint Bernard is ! and the whole army of Shavian enthusiasts and Fabian followers presumably accept the findings of their prophet.

CHAPTER X

WHAT IS PRIVATE PROPERTY ?

MR. SHAW seems confused himself, and is certainly confusing to his readers, when he tries to draw a sharp distinction between " personal possessions," which, as we have seen he entirely approves of, and " private property " or " real property." (He uses the two terms as if they were interchangeable, but we will pass that, as, for the purpose of his argument, it does not make much difference.) It is " private property " which he holds to be the root of all evil. He says (p. 102) that the distinction is clear (?), and proceeds to explain as follows :

Personal possessions, such as your dinner or your umbrella, may seem to be your private property, but they are not so really, *because you hold them on public conditions.* You are not free to use your umbrells for purposes of assault, or your dinner for the purpose of murder or suicide (by insidiously introducing poison into it). But if you own land you can do what you like with it—so his argument runs—and he goes on to pile up harrowing examples of the possibility of landowners driving the population into the sea, or evicting a sick woman with a new-born baby into the snow, or preventing the vitally necessary development of a trading village because it will spoil the

view from the window of a bedroom which may not be occupied more than a few days in the year, or not at all for years together. All these examples leave us gasping, but we try to hold on to the thread of the contention, *which is that public conditions are the test.* "If you ask," says Mr. Shaw, "why landowners are allowed to do with their land what you are not allowed to do with your umbrella, the reply is that the land is private property, or, as the lawyers used to say, real property, whilst the umbrella is only personal property."

It is difficult to follow Mr. Shaw's parallel closely, because obviously, even with the worst intentions, one cannot assault a person with a hay-rick, or poison him with a ten-acre wheat-field. But does Mr. Shaw seriously ask us to believe that landlords own their land, in contradistinction to people who own umbrellas, with full legal authority to use it for purposes of murder or suicide or assault? The assault or the murder or the suicide are illegal actions, and it seems quite clear that their illegality has nothing to do with whether they are committed on privately-owned land or in a public road, nor whether the weapon used is a privately-owned umbrella or, say, a municipal pick-axe.

As to evictions, the power to evict is well known to be strictly regulated and controlled by law. So untrue is it to suggest that the law is all on the side of the landlord, that in the earlier part of the eighteenth century it was often all but impossible for a landlord to rid himself of a defaulting tenant, and much of the legislation of the last two hundred years has been directed to assisting the landlord in suitable cases to regain possession of his house. It is impossible in a

small book such as this to go into the legal position in any detail, but a glance at the provisions of the Common Law Procedure Act, 1860 ; the Conveyancing Act, 1881 ; the National Health Insurance Act, 1924 ; the Rent and Mortgage Interest (Restrictions) Acts, 1920–1924 ; or any of the other numerous statutes dealing with this most difficult subject, will suffice to show how heavily the scales of justice are weighted in the tenant's favour, in almost every case.

Again, if land is arbitrarily and unreasonably withheld, when needed for public uses, such as railways, etc., it can be, and constantly is, compulsorily acquired by statutory authority. It has long been the practice of Parliament to grant to Public Authorities, or Companies of the type known as Public Utility Companies, power to infringe the rights of private property with impunity. Not only powers for the compulsory purchase of land, but also to enable them to commit what would otherwise amount to Public or Private Nuisances, have been granted to a host of such bodies, and the volume of so-called " Private Acts " which receive the Royal Assent every year, is proof that the stream has not dried up. Everyone can think of numerous examples within their own experience ; the great Railway Companies ; the Port of London Authority ; a whole multitude of Gas, Water, Electricity and other undertakings. All these are persistent reminders that in England the exclusive right of a private landowner is never permitted to stand in the way of what the legislature considers to be the public advantage. It is quite possible to argue that the law in all these matters has gone too far, or, on the other hand, that it has not gone far enough, and needs further development,

and that still more restriction of private rights is required in the common interest. But it is really *not* possible to make good the assertion that private property is held without any public conditions of any kind !

A dozen instances to the contrary leap to one's mind. Is it permissible to have man-traps on private land ? or a dangerous bull in a field to which people have access ? or wild beasts at large in a private park ? A man may not even burn down his own house ; it is an offence against the law ! He may not build cottages on his estates according to his own fancies and wishes, be they good or bad, but is subject to all the bye-laws and regulations of the local authority, which are also sometimes wise and sometimes the reverse ! What, in fact, does the law give him in the way of special privilege with his private property ? It gives him the right of exclusion. He is entitled to enjoy his land privately and separately if he chooses, and can refuse entry to others, warning them off, and suing them if they persist, as trespassers. Now it is not denied that this right of exclusion may be exercised cruelly and unreasonably, and sometimes is so abused. But so may the right to the enjoyment of personal possessions be abused, as far as that goes. Mr. Shaw is not allowed to hit me with his private umbrella ; true, and a very right and proper restriction ! But " public conditions " do not compel him to share it with me if we are out in pouring rain together, though his failure to do so may result in my getting an attack of pneumonia ! If Mr. Shaw, driving in his motor, wrapped in furs on a snowy day, is asked by some poor tramp for a lift and refuses it, or expects his chauffeur as a matter of course to

refuse such a request, the refusal may be a reasonable one, or very harsh and unbrotherly. It all depends on the circumstances, as the landlord's action with regard to trespass does. But there appears no difference at all in the legality of either action on the ground that one exclusion is from " real or private property," and the other from the use of a " personal possession." As a matter of fact exclusion and denial to others of a share in any wealth or amenity is more common with personal possessions than with real property. Many landlords throw open their houses and parks and gardens regularly for public enjoyment, while owners of personal possessions share them very rarely. This is indeed natural and inevitable, and no reasonable person would complain of it, but it makes Mr. Shaw's distinction seem quite meaningless.

Let us consider the specific instance which he chooses as his illustration. To prevent a pier being built, on which the prosperity of a village depended, in order to safeguard a private view would certainly, in the opinion of most right-minded people, be an abuse of power—a very selfish anti-social action. But it would not be illegal, says Mr. Shaw. As we have seen, many bad and selfish actions, whether with regard to land or chattels, are not illegal. In the case of the village and the pier, however, the remedy would be obvious. The local authorities would no doubt approach Parliament with a petition for an Act enabling them to obtain the necessary land and make the desired construction. If they could make good their case, and show that there was no suitable alternative place for the pier, and that it was necessary and desirable from the point of view of public policy, there is no reason

to suppose that their petition would not be granted. If Mr. Shaw wanted to point out a real grievance and hardship, he might very rightly urge that the procedure is expensive, and should be simplified and cheapened, and in this contention he would find most people ready to agree with him.

If any wicked landlords, encouraged by Mr. Shaw's confident assurance of their complete irresponsibility and liberty to do what they will with their own, should proceed to turn women in childbirth out of their cottages to die in the snow, we imagine they will find themselves liable to prosecution ! But, as we have no reason to suppose they are any less humane than Mr. Shaw, it seems unlikely that anyone will wish to push the question to such a practical test !

CHAPTER XI

PROBLEMS OF QUALITY OR QUANTITY*

THERE are a great many human problems in which the practically interesting question involved is one of degree and expediency, as tried by the test of experience, and not one of abstract rightness or wrongness according to academic theory. In other words they are problems of quantity and not of quality. This is particularly true of Individualism and Socialism. It is a foolish waste of time to argue as to which is right and which is wrong, because the manifest answer is that both are right, or, if you prefer it, that both are wrong! By which is meant that each is right and necessary in its proper place, and disastrous out of it. The useful question, therefore, is the quantitative one. How much do we want of each, and what are their respective proper places?

There is a palpable insincerity in suggesting, as Mr. Shaw does more than once, that people are really Socialists at heart without knowing it, and are already committed to Socialist principles which they cannot logically resist following out to the conclusion of a Socialist State, because they accept the National Post

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* I have borrowed this expression from Professor Graham Wallas.

Office and the National Army and Navy! As to the latter, he might as reasonably have cited the Law Courts as an argument for the nationalization of the mines! Everyone, whether Conservative, Liberal or Socialist, agrees that national defence against a foreign foe, and national justice (the protection of one citizen against injury by another) are, rightly, and properly, and inevitably, public undertakings paid for by the public funds, not private undertakings financed and controlled by private persons, and made a source of private profit. The controversial question begins when you turn to consider the vast field of Public Works and Productive Services.

I do not know that Mr. Shaw was altogether happy in his choice of the Post Office as a conclusive argument. A great many people do not accept it with unreserved enthusiasm, nor regard it as a convincing instance of the superiority of state over private ownership and management. They acquiesce in the existing state of things, certainly. They see that it has certain advantages, and agree that it is probably impossible, in any case, to reverse it now. But they are by no means convinced that it could not have been better and more economically managed on other lines. Not, of course, on such lines as Mr. Shaw supposes! He asks, why is it that the Nationalized Postal Service is so much cheaper and more extensive than a private letter-carrying company could make it? (This is perhaps begging the question.) He answers that the reason is that the cost of carrying letters differs greatly as between one letter and another (which is manifestly true), and that the Postmaster-General averages the cost all round and charges the same for each letter,

whether it has to travel a hundred yards or a thousand miles. (Most people probably knew this already.) He then assumes that, if private companies were managing the affair, they would upset the whole of this sensible system, sell cheap stamps for short distances, and not undertake the long distances at all ! These would be left to the Postmaster-General, who, having only letters with high cost of carriage left to deal with, would necessarily have to put up the price of postage enormously, and we should all be greatly the losers in the long run. But, of course, it would not happen like that at all ! If the nation decided that its letters could be more satisfactorily carried for it by private enterprise than by a State Department, the private company to which it entrusted the work would, naturally, be subject to control, and have to comply with required conditions. Just the same thing happens when statutory powers are given to a Railway Company, or to the Port of London Authority, or to a Public Utility Undertaking for the supply of water or light. They are all controlled and regulated, whether as to their services and charges, or as to their rates of dividend, or in all these and many other ways. Those who criticize our postal service point to countries, e.g. Canada, where whole departments of communication, which here come under the Post Office, such as Telegraphs and Telephones, are managed by private enterprise, and they see no intrinsic reason why letters and parcels should not be conveyed in the same way with equal success. They are, I am informed, actually so conveyed in Venezuela. It is probably true that the great bulk of international telegraphic communications are privately managed. If you wish to cable, whether east or west, you will almost certainly make use of

the Eastern, or Western, or Marconi Companies. These may very possibly unite in the future into one vast Imperial Communications Company, in which, as in the case of Imperial Airways, or the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the British Government would reserve very definite rights of control. At any rate there exist at present private enterprises carrying out national and imperial business and, it is claimed, carrying it out more efficiently and economically than could be done by a bureaucratic office.

But whether such criticisms are justified or not is beside the point in repudiating Mr. Shaw's suggestion that acceptance of certain socially-run services makes one a Socialist. For no sane capitalist has ever claimed to my knowledge that *nothing* should ever be nationalized or municipalized! No one outside a lunatic asylum would take up such a position! Capitalists are, as a rule, practical business men, and far too sensible to go in for such dogmatic generalities. They prefer to leave these to extremists on the right and left wings of doctrinaire Individualism and Socialism, and to deal themselves with every case as it arises, on its merits. A true individualist of the better sort will make only one stipulation; that the final test of every communal service which must decide whether it be good or whether it be evil, can only be its effect on the individuals who make up the State, and that in the broadest sense. The old Utilitarian slogan, "the greatest good of the greatest number" has often been used in defence of Socialist schemes and to justify inroads on the liberties of the individual. But, rightly interpreted, it is really an argument for Individualism. For it should mean not merely the greatest average

standard of comfort, but the greatest sum of moral as well as material good, the development to the highest point of each person's character and capacity. More than this, it must consider not only the greatest good of the greatest number of people now alive, but of the generations that come after.

The bearing of this on some modern tendencies in legislation is apparent. However necessary State aid and relief may be in an emergency (and most reasonable people will agree that they *are* necessary, on grounds both of humanity and expediency), they can only be justified as part of a permanent scheme if it can be shown, or is found by experience, that they do not demoralize the individual. If they rob him of his natural instinct to self-help and self-reliance ; if they accustom him to the fatal idea that a little more or less effort on his own part is not vitally important, since the consequences of failure will always be averted by authority ; then they are ruinous, not only to national wealth but also to personal welfare.

Do not let us have misunderstandings. These are not inuendoes against the benefits of Unemployment Insurance, which it is both unfair and misleading to describe as a " dole." It is *not* a dole, since those who partake of it have contributed to it. The principle is sound and sensible, and the practice of it has been essential to avert disaster on a large scale. We do not agree with Mr. Shaw that it has not even the blessing of kindness on it, and that we would all stop it if we could : most of us would feel acute uneasiness and distress if we thought it was no longer functioning.

But it is capable, like other measures, of being abused by unworthy persons, and needs very careful watching to prevent such anomalies as those noticed in an earlier chapter, where the principle of "less eligibility" had been frankly abandoned.

To return to the distinction between "quantitative and qualitative" problems, which Professor Graham Wallas used to stress in his delightful lectures at the School of Economics. Individualists, generally speaking, even the most "out and out" among them, will approve of Socialism in the sense of Municipal Enterprise in Sanitary Services. No one will suggest that these, which are essential to the well-being of all citizens, should be handed over to Individual Enterprise, and be made a source of private gain. Evidently a service for the protection of the public health is one for the public control of which very strong arguments can be brought forward. These arguments seem conclusive and unanswerable in the case of such services as cannot in the nature of things be charged for directly, or bring in a calculable financial return, viz., registration of births and deaths, notification of infectious diseases, fever hospitals for the segregation of infected persons, compulsory vaccination, and so forth. It is right, however, to point out with regard to many other sanitary services, that a large number of municipalities in South America and elsewhere, do entrust their drainage systems, water-supply, lighting and other public utility services, to private enterprise, with apparently satisfactory results.

On the other hand, the most intolerant enthusiast for Socialism will not generally demand the Nationalization

of, say, the sale of cosmetics! I understand that a great deal of money is made in this trade, as it certainly is in women's millinery; but the nationalizers and municipal traders seem content to leave lipsticks and face creams, as well as hats, to private enterprise! The reason is of course obvious. The demand for such things is so partial, personal and variable, the risks involved by change of fashion and social custom are so immense, that it would be highly improper as well as supremely ridiculous to ask the nation to undertake them.

Socialists may indeed take the line that they would suppress all such luxury trades, and compel capital to be invested only in approved utilitarian enterprises. Many of you will think this an excellent plan, while others will be indignant and aghast. But the difficulty about sumptuary laws, even supposing you think them desirable theoretically, is that they always break down, in practice, from the sheer impossibility of getting any satisfactory definition of what a luxury is! Luxuries are a relative and not an absolute conception and, moreover, they are never a fixed, but always a shifting conception. The rich woman's luxury of to-day is the poor woman's necessity to-morrow. The use of tea, coffee and tobacco, of bicycles and motor-cars, are well-known instances of this.

We never seem to get a better test than Adam Smith's, as to whether any Service or Public Work ought or ought not to be supplied by the State. He tells us that if the State is to provide it, it must be not only "in the highest degree advantageous to a Great Society" but also "of such a nature that the

profit could never repay the expense to any individual or small number of individuals." We must, of course, allow for the difference in scale of private enterprise since Adam Smith's day. Its whole position and possibilities have been completely revolutionized by the amazing development of the joint-stock company. But we still ask the same questions as to the desirability of Public Works and Services. These, be it remembered, mean works and services the risk of which is borne by the taxpayer. That means that any deficit incurred is paid for compulsorily out of taxation drawn from your pocket and mine; so it is very desirable we should have some reliable test to apply to them! And the test-questions are these: First, is the work or the service really necessary in the interests of the community as a whole? And, secondly, can it be better provided by public than by private action? If the answer to both these questions is not definitely in the affirmative, we shall disallow the adventure. In so doing we shall be standing on the firm ground that nothing should be done by the State which can be *as well done* by individual effort, lest private enterprise and energy, which are the prime sources of progress and production, be discouraged.

You will have observed, my dear sisters, that these tests make the question of whether any given undertaking should be nationalized, or municipalized, or left to private enterprise, a matter not of abstract preconceived theory, but of practical advantage, with pros and cons to be well weighed in each case. In short they make it a problem of quantity and not of quality, in which the British genius for a working compromise, regardless of strict logic, finds full scope for mutual

accommodations and making the best of the world and human nature as it finds them. But the Socialist attitude towards it, as expounded by Mr. Shaw, is quite different, and we must consider it very carefully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII

GENERAL NATIONALIZATION OF INDUSTRY

With Socialists it seems that the question of Public versus Private Enterprise is not a question of degree, or expediency, or experience, or indeed of common sense. It is a matter of stark abstract principle, possibly not unaffected by prejudice! All private ownership is *wrong*! morally wrong in itself as well as materially bad in its results. There can be no compromise, no adjustment with the accurst thing. The Government must become the one great universal provider and monopolist, acquiring all the powers of employment, all the instruments of production, of distribution and of exchange. It must be "the national landlord, the national financier, the national employer." (These are Mr. Shaw's own words, p. 97, which I like to quote verbatim when space and time allow, so as to feel sure I am not misrepresenting him by condensation). No arguments are put forward in this chapter of his to justify the policy of concentrating the whole mass of power in the hands of Government, except a single one. That is the argument that it would render possible, and is the only thing that could render possible, equal division of the national income. If that argument does not commend itself to us, no further inducement is offered!

But, in the chapter in which Mr. Shaw offers us

advice as to our shopping (p. 105), he tells us that the Socialists will rid us of the terrible over-charges we pay at present, and secure goods for everyone *at cost price* by nationalizing or municipalizing the industries that produce them. But how, we wonder, can this be ? It is very difficult to understand how, if all goods and services were indeed supplied at cost price, as Mr. Shaw promises, there could be any surplus, or, consequently, any saving. Yet Mr. Shaw, as we noticed in an earlier chapter, himself explained to us in another place that saving and the accumulation of fresh Capital were essential to the development of industry, and inevitable under any system. Now since under his scheme this function could not be performed privately, as at present, (for no individual would be allowed to save and accumulate), it needs must be undertaken publicly by the State. If, however, the State must supply at cost price, and does not permit itself to make any Profit or Surplus, where are the necessary reserves to come from ? No explanations are vouchsafed to meet these difficulties, but Mr. Shaw tries to reassure us against the qualms which we may perhaps feel at the almost unnaturally rosy prospect he holds out, by pointing to those industries which are already owned and conducted by the nation, or partly by the municipality and partly by private companies. And he adds : " The municipal supply is cheaper, and with honest and capable management always must be cheaper than the private company's supply."

His patient listener, allowed for once to voice her thoughts, asks : " Why must it ? " Mr. Shaw replies : " Well, shortly, because it pays less for its capital, less for its management, and nothing at all for profits, this

triple advantage going to the consumer in cheapness." Now this promises to be a really interesting discussion, and one in which facts and figures might be invoked, and some conclusion come to, but Mr. Shaw in his usual elusive fashion flies off to the Post Office, and does not follow it up. We, however, must refuse to leave his airy assertions without cross-examination.

If it were indeed true that the Socialization of Industry would give us cheap and abundant supplies of all the goods and services we want, the advantage would be so great and manifest that we could hardly expect any woman, let alone a poor one, to resist the temptation to become a Socialist without further argument or ado ! And if it is not true—if the dazzling bait is only a mirage which vanishes as we approach, how very important that we should know it before we have wandered too far, and lost ourselves in the arid desert !

Mr. Shaw's three reasons why municipal supplies must aways be cheaper than those of private enterprise, seem plausible enough. It is, at present, true, as he says, that local authorities can, as a rule, borrow more cheaply than most private companies, because they can offer a permanent security in the shape of the rates of all the dwellers in their area. It would appear, however, to be only true in so far as comparatively limited borrowings are concerned, and also in so far as there are many rich private persons, heavily rated, within their area, thus making it a good security. If these conditions were swept away, as they would be under Mr. Shaw's universal nationalization of industry, and destruction of privately owned capital, it is almost certain that loans would not be (voluntarily) made at

favourable rates. As to his second point : it is true that the local authorities pay less for management : (but there is another side to this, which we shall notice in a minute !) And, turning to the third, it is true that they have not got to make a profit for their shareholders, as they have no shareholders ! It may be noticed, however, in connection with this last, as a fact, surprising perhaps but nevertheless a fact, that Mutual Insurance Companies and various other co-operative societies, rarely seem able to quote a lower price for their services than similar enterprises which are on an ordinary profit-making basis. Another point, worth noticing, is that, practically, in a private commercial enterprise, Mr. Shaw's first and third arguments would really amount to one only : the shareholders who provide the capital are also the enterprisers who control the business through their board of directors, and they take the interest for their capital and any profit which may result, in one and the same payment, viz. a higher dividend. It is quite true, however, that on analysis this payment would be found to be separable into two parts, theoretically different, one being the market price for the use of capital, in other words the rate of interest, and the other being the profit, if any, which is technically the payment to the enterpriser for the risk he undertakes.

With these provisos, we certainly should expect, under the favourable conditions that Mr. Shaw enumerates, to find municipal enterprises in a very flourishing state financially, and well able, as things are at present, to charge low rates for what they supply. Two of his three reasons, at least, seem good reasons why Municipal Enterprise *ought*, unless there is a hitch in the theory

somewhere, to be at a great advantage, and come out on top in every competition with private enterprise. But is this the case ? Very far from it ! There may be, (at any rate we will suppose so for the sake of argument), some brilliantly successful instances ; but in many cases it is notorious and will not be denied, that existing municipal enterprises are not paying their way at all. True, they may be supplying their service cheap, but they are quite unsound economically, and if they were private concerns this could not be concealed. They would have to declare their bankruptcy and shut up shop. Being a municipality, however, they need not do this, but take a subsidy from the rates and taxes to enable them to cover the deficit and disguise the loss on their working.

Now the ignorant woman may say, what does this matter to her, provided she gets her tram fares, or whatever it is, dirt cheap ? But you, my intelligent sisters, will have noted with extreme promptness that, as you yourselves pay the rates and taxes out of which the deficit has to be provided, you have not really got your tram-fares cheap at all. And what is worse, you do not know how much they are costing you ! And worst of all, though you may decide that you cannot afford such expensive liabilities as municipal tram-fares, but will walk instead, this will profit you nothing. For it is an inseparable part of all public enterprise that if, as so often happens, they cannot be made to pay their way but are run at a loss, then *whether you use the service or not, you must foot the bill !*

Now we see the cautious wisdom of old Adam Smith, when he laid down his tests for Public Services ! For it

is not right or equitable that a woman should be compelled to pay for services she does not want, or at a higher rate than she feels they are worth to her, unless it can be clearly shown that " they are in the highest degree advantageous to a Great Society " and " such as cannot be equally well or better supplied " by that private enterprise which leaves her free to use them or not as she pleases, and only to pay for them if, and to the extent that she does use them.

But why, we wonder, should the municipal enterprises, which have so many advantages, do so badly ? There are various reasons. First let us examine more closely that very fact we have just noticed, that if the business does not prosper the natural consequences will not follow. Consequences are most educative things ! If they are averted, it does, inevitably, take away a very valuable spur to prudence and efficiency. This is one amongst the many, almost insuperable, difficulties, which have always been found to operate against the success of Relief Works for the Unemployed. Everyone sees that work is better than doles, and that there is much work waiting to be done, that would be of public advantage. But if a workman employed on an ordinary commercial job does bad work, the natural consequence is that he gets the sack, and so an automatic check to bad work and slackness operates, and prevents the need of other discipline. But a Relief Work is not primarily created for production, but for relief ! If, therefore, your workers are unsatisfactory, (short of deliberate slackness or insubordination), it is impossible to apply the natural remedy. For in so doing you would re-create the very problem of unemployment which your Work was to relieve ! Hence it becomes

uneconomic : that is to say, it is so expensive to produce that it cannot pay its cost ; and, incidentally, the calibre of the workers steadily deteriorates.

It is not, of course, suggested for a moment that a Municipal Enterprise is on all fours with a Relief Work ! Obviously they are not parallel cases, or comparable in many respects. But in this one respect there is certainly a disquieting resemblance ; namely, that there is a tendency to keep on less efficient employees, and at higher rates than are economically justifiable. And the cause seems the same in both cases. It is that those painful but highly educative " consequences," which give a stern discipline to every private company, quite impersonally but quite inexorably, have been eliminated or can be glossed over.

Now for a second reason which probably accounts largely for the failure of many municipalized businesses to do as well, as, according to Mr. Shaw's theories, they ought to do. It is that very same " cheapness of management," which he claims as one of their advantages ! Cheap management is generally bad management ; the very worst economy that any group of enterprisers can go in for. Capitalists will not be accused by Mr. Shaw of tending to pay more for any kind of labour, whether of hand or brain, than they find essential ! Yet they declare emphatically that they cannot afford not to buy the best managerial gifts which are available. Their only regret is the rarity of first-class talents of this kind ! Many Socialists themselves deplore Labour's tendency to be jealous of these gifts, and its unwillingness to pay generously for them. They attribute a good deal of the failure of Labour

organizations to this mistaken policy, and it is certainly a contributory cause.

So it seems that the disadvantages inseparable from public production, however well run, combined in many cases with poor management, outweigh the advantages of cheaper Capital and no profits. There is no reason to believe that a general nationalization of Industry would bring down the prices of either goods or services. Even if they were actually supplied at cost prices, that would not help us if the costs were excessive and extravagant. If a Socialist Government went a step further, as is only too probable under political pressure, and supplied us below cost price, or even made the service "free," as people so misleadingly and inaccurately call it, that would not help us either. For the State has no gold mine in its back garden ! National products must be paid for, like any others, or they cannot be produced. And *we* are always the people who must pay, for the simple reason that there are no other people !

All the evidence seems to indicate that we should be poorer and not richer if Industry generally were socialized. But apart from this, there is another enormously important point to notice, and that is that we should have no guarantee of being able to get the goods and services we want at all, at any price ! A Socialist Government would avowedly be out to supply what it thought we ought to want !—which is not the same thing ! They might, perhaps, make an excellent choice for us, but we should prefer to choose for ourselves ; and this is what the Capitalist system enables us to do.

But you, my Socialist sisters, will say: "That is all very well, but in practice we find that we cannot get a great many things that we would choose to have, at prices we can afford, because it pays Capital better to produce expensive luxuries than cheap necessaries. That is where we feel that a Socialist Government would help us. It would control Capital, and direct it into the channels where it is most needed."

This is a point of view with which, frankly, I have a great deal of sympathy. It is a genuine argument for that mixture of Public and Private Enterprise which the political common sense of our people has already evolved, and which may quite conceivably have to be carried further. It is evident, and it is recognized, that if there is a common civic need, and if private enterprise either will not or cannot supply the need, then the duty of the State is to step in. This clearly applies to such instances as the need for clean water, good roads or sound drainage. It *may* apply to the demand for gas or electric power and so on. And, theoretically at any rate, it *could* of course be applied to almost any service or supply for which there was a general demand. But we must be very careful how we extend the practice. If the undertaking is one in which the profit could possibly repay the expense, there is little doubt that private Capital will be ready and willing to flow into it. If not, the inference is clear, that the business could only be run at a loss. Still, that does not necessarily settle the question. The service may be vital to the health and happiness of the population, and in that case it must be produced at all costs. But *we have to be very sure*, since otherwise we are compelling the whole body of citizens to pay for supplies which only

some of them want, and think the others ought to want, and ought to have, whether they want them or not !

But perhaps the strongest argument against general Nationalization of Industry is the question of Risk. This will seem a platitude to all those who have practical experience of business, yet no apology is needed for reiterating the point. The public who see the few dazzling successes of trade and commerce, forget the failures ! For one who becomes a " magnate," and a hundred who do well, there are perhaps a thousand who either make a bare living, or who smash. They risk their capital on a venture, and they have the right to do so, for it is private property. If they lose, it is only their loss ; if they win, it is not only they who are richer, but all the men and women for whom they have provided employment, and the public who have had a new want supplied. Even the losers in this great game are often a source of increased wealth to the world. They have taken up, perhaps, some new invention, and been unable to put it successfully on the market. The idea may be new to the public taste, and as yet no demand exists. But they have blazed a way. Their pioneer effort brings others in their train ; improvements are made, difficulties overcome, and at last the demand may run into millions. All who enjoy the new wealth, be it motor-cars or char-a-bancs excursions, gramophones or popular concerts, hotels de luxe or cheap restaurants and tea-shops for Everywoman, have cause to be grateful to the energy and enterprise which created it. But to ask the State to run risks which are right and proper for a Merchant Adventurer, would be manifestly wrong. If there is a failure, and there must perforce be many failures, all the tax-payers will

be the losers. The duty of the Treasury is to be the faithful guardian of the people's money, which they are compelled to confide to its care. It should take no financial risks except those which are absolutely essential to the welfare of citizens.

We are driven then to the conclusion that under a Socialist Government which did its duty in this respect, we should be deprived of innumerable amenities with which private enterprise provides us. For though they do indeed greatly add to the fullness and richness of our lives on the material side, yet no one can contend that they are essential, and evidently a risk is involved in their production. And under a Socialist Government which failed in its duty in this matter, we should have to pay for all sorts of speculations, which might or might not turn out well, but as to which in any case we should have no power of choice. The Government would compulsorily do our saving for us and choose our investments, and pay us our annual allowances! These last would be larger or smaller, not according to our own actions but according to the total product, the success or otherwise of the nationally-conducted industry. We might be ruined, or we might be well-fed and well-cared-for children, but it seems clear that under this paternal Government we should never be allowed to grow up!

It is very curious! Mr. Shaw is so keenly alive to the evil of keeping children in tutelage to their natural parents beyond the necessary period of infancy. He sees so clearly how this prevents or hampers their full liberty to develop on their own lines. And he is perfectly right. Yet he seems ready to acquiesce quite

happily in any amount of control and narrowing limitation of action for adults, so long as it is done by his Socialist Government, and, of course, "for their own good," as our nurses used to say!

But most women feel that the ordinance of Nature is that a time comes when every human being must be given the fullest freedom to exercise all his or her powers, subject only to the condition of not interfering with other people's freedom! A child must be controlled for a time, but when he becomes a man he has a right to all human activities. He must have free access to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, to the eternal choice of the human soul between death and life. Everywoman knows this, and lets her son go out to make his own way and his own mistakes, only adjuring him: "Choose Life, that you may live!"

I am much mistaken if she will desire for him any Government which, while providing him with bed, bath and breakfast, and all the other meals, and all the necessary shelter and clothing, treats him like a child and takes from him his heritage of freedom and liberty of choice in so many matters. She would rather he went hungry if need be, than that he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage!

CHAPTER XIII

NATIONALIZATION OF BANKING

MR. SHAW recognizes that banking is a quite peculiar business, and certainly he makes some quite peculiar comments upon it !

First of all he says (p. 264) that " Banking heaps up huge masses of Capital in the banker's hands for absolutely nothing but the provision of a till to put the money in, and clerks to keep an account of it." He can hardly mean us to take this remark seriously !

Banking is based on a system of Loans and Deposits which depend on credit, or, in other words, on confidence. It needs a very high degree of confidence to make a successful bank. Wise people will not put their money into the care of third parties for safe custody, unless they have every reason to be very sure that these latter are men of the highest integrity : men who may safely be trusted, not only as to character in the sense of honesty, but as to carefulness and discretion. If they disregard these precautions they are not wise people, and pay heavily for their folly or ignorance. The memory of such bitter aftermaths even in recent years is still fresh in the public mind.

But much more than this. Clients rely on their bankers with regard to investments. They know that

the money they bring to be taken care of, and handed out as and when they require it, will *not* be left idle in the till, nor do they bring it with that purpose or in that expectation, however well constructed and burglar-proof the till may be! Mr. Shaw, of course, knows all this elementary stuff perfectly well, and has even explained it with what seems unnecessary care to his intelligent reader in another chapter (p. 246). The clients, in fact, bring their money *to be used*, knowing quite well that the banker will at once invest the greater part of it, and obtain interest for the use of it; otherwise the business could not be carried on, nor loans made to those requiring them. The clients are also perfectly well aware that if it is used foolishly and rashly the bank may smash, and they may lose both interest and capital if their money is on deposit, bearing interest, or, if it is on current account, they will at all events be liable to lose the sum which happens at the time to be standing to their credit.

They require, therefore, that their bankers shall be not only men of proved integrity, but of great experience and judgment, with an expert knowledge of finance, and of all the various fields of industry, trade and commerce, which will compete as investments for the deposited money. There must also, for various reasons, be a good financial backing to a bank, before it can appeal with any chance of success to the public to open accounts with it. All this Mr. Shaw ignores or pooh-poohs! He declares that there is a good deal of mystery about banking, manufactured by the bankers (on the principle presumably of the medicine-man!) to keep up their prestige. But, he says, there is "no difficulty" about banking, and, after reading

his book he thinks that we ought to understand the business much better than the average banker! He rather gives away his case, however, by admitting the next moment that there *is* a certain difficulty about the question of investments, and consequently a certain need for sound judgment in the banker! It is as if a person were to say: "Unhappy marriages are ridiculous! What is all this fuss about! There is no difficulty about marriage: it is merely a question of two people behaving towards each other with tact and understanding and forbearance, and continuing to be attractive to each other, and, of course, that no one else must come between them! The only thing necessary is that they should be perfectly well suited to each other"!

If any young women who have read Mr. Shaw's book, and therefore (he hopes) know more about banking than the average banker, should hire a nice office, and a couple of clerks, and buy the most modern and convenient till to put the money in, and set up as bankers, they might find themselves disappointed of customers, and that there was no money to put in the till! Presumably, however, the sentence we have quoted is just one of Mr. Shaw's fireworks, and means nothing in particular.

His real argument is that business people need and must have Capital; (quite true!). And that it is often difficult for the poor man or the small business man to get the small amounts they require because big financiers do not care to trouble about comparatively small sums with small commissions, and prefer to deal only in millions with vast commissions.

This is rather puzzling. Mr. Shaw seems to be mixing up the businesses of ordinary banking and of "big finance" and flotation of companies, which are not at all the same thing. People needing money for such flotations would not normally apply to a bank at all—the rates would be too high for such a purpose. They would approach a firm dealing habitually with such business to float their company, get the shares underwritten, and offered to the public, who, if they liked the investment, would take up the shares. It might be true that there would be the difficulty that Mr. Shaw contemplates in the case of a small company without influential backing, but we should hardly have thought it could apply to the case of a bank manager granting or refusing an overdraft to a customer on the grounds that the amount involved was too small. Mr. Shaw evidently thinks it does, for he expressly says: "The bank manager does not think it worth the bank's while to let them" (the small applicants, that is) "overdraw," and he concludes that, as a result of such refusals, the small man is driven to borrow the money he needs at exorbitant rates from money-lenders. One can only say that this is directly contrary to the usual experience. As a rule, provided the security is adequate—a point on which banks are necessarily bound to be particular, in the interests of their other customers no less than their own—they are extremely ready to grant credits to farmers or traders or manufacturers in a small way. Still, there may be, doubtless are, cases where an unknown man of integrity, industry, and with a good opening for capital, may be unable to obtain the necessary loan or overdraft on account of not being able to give the security required by the bank rules.

There may therefore be a case for opening municipal banks in suitable places and under suitable conditions, if it is found that the legitimate claims of the small business man are, in fact, overlooked, and insufficiently catered for by the branches of the big joint-stock banks in his area. Agricultural Banks, and Industrial Credit Banks, designed to meet this need, and working on various methods and conditions, have done well, I believe, in Denmark and Germany, and Mr. Shaw claims that the Birmingham Municipal Bank has been brilliantly successful. If that is so, I have nothing to say against it. On the principle I have urged, of judging each case as it arises on its merits, there is no reason why anyone should condemn such a bank off-hand on abstract theory, any more than that the firmest believers in our private banking system should feel bound to object to the excellent Post Office Savings Bank. It is a question of demonstrating that in any given case a need existed, that it was not met by any of the available machinery, and that the new machine has worked well and had satisfactory results. The Birmingham bank is a bank run on its own lines, competing with other banks, as it has a perfect right to do. If it is well run, and fulfils a need, the rate-payers will presumably not object to it. The other banks may feel that the use of the municipal backing and guarantee is unfair competition, but such an argument ought not to weigh against a proved need which they had failed to satisfy, if such was the case. Competition is healthy and the very essence of our free system.

But all this is a very different matter to the Nationalization of Banking in general. For that would mean that Government, at once or by degrees, would

take over all the banks, including the Bank of England, thus killing competition, and establishing a most dangerous monopoly. It is evident that with all competition removed the banks would no longer have to study their customers' requirements. They would be in a position to finance undertakings of doubtful economic soundness, on grounds of sympathy and sentiment and general approval of their object. I do not say a Socialist Government would necessarily do this. Probably if Mr. Philip Snowden were Chancellor of the Exchequer, and still had control of the runaway horses of the left wing of his chariot, he would restrain them from such unwise action. But undoubtedly the Nationalization of Banking would give unheard-of autocratic powers to the Government. It might, and probably would be extremely difficult for them to refuse to use these powers on behalf of some depressed trade, or in order to get themselves out of a financial difficulty and balance their Budget. The reason why the scheme is put in the forefront of the Socialist programme is easy to see. Indeed it is avowed by Socialist speakers and writers with delightful candour. The idea is to seize the fort, to capture the citadel, and then turn the guns upon private ownership and private production. They declare frankly that they would then not need to bother much about anything else, as they would be able to control all capital absolutely, directing where it should go and how it should be used. And this they would do, not, as at present, in the interests of the investor, but in order to engineer the Socialist Revolution and further its purposes.

But in vain is the snare laid in the sight of the bird ! It seems unlikely, to say the least of it, that the

vast body of citizens will ever consent to the Bank of England and all the great joint-stock banks being put at the mercy of the Government of the day, whatever its political complexion might be. They believe that our banks, like our Courts of Justice, must be kept entirely free from political influence. There are some who sympathize vaguely with the desire to nationalize everything on general principles, yet feel uncertain and a little nervous of its possible effect in such an expert business as banking. These urge amiably that it might be tried as an experiment, which could be reverted from if it failed! But they forget the complex international nature of finance; the slow growth of that delicate plant—credit; and the ghastly disaster to civilization if the whole carefully balanced edifice had a corner-stone rashly pulled out, and toppled over! Melodramatic prophecies are rarely convincing, but there is no need to colour the picture highly. Men and women of any practical business knowledge can guess what the consequences would be like. However quickly we hastened to replace the corner-stone and repair our mistake, no one can tell how long that might take to do, nor how much damage might prove to be irreparable. That people learn by experience and the method of Trial and Error is true, but this is not an argument that will appeal to Mr. Shaw. To do him justice he does not, as a rule, hold at all with people meddling with what they do not understand, in the sacred name of Democracy. In another part of his book he has told us how wise people like himself always submit to the guidance of the experts in any subject, from railway porters upwards. He must have forgotten this when he encouraged his readers to believe that the mere perusal of his book qualified

them to sit among the banking experts ! And, even if we approve, on principle, of people being allowed to make their own mistakes and learn from experience, there are limits as to the amount of risks that can be run. It is, we agree, an excellent principle of education, but the British Empire, including the Bank of England, and our whole banking and financial system, seems an expensive box of bricks to give a child to play with !

Let us suppose, however, for one moment that the Nationalization of the Bank of England and all the other banks was an accomplished fact. Mr. Shaw's idea seems to be that loans would be freely given to poor but deserving people who needed them, and at far lower rates than are possible now because of the wicked shareholders who insist on a return for the money they have lent. But Mr. Shaw appears to forget that, as Mr. Beaumont Pease, I think, once remarked, a bank cannot start out as a lender ; it must first of all be a borrower ! People are apt to overlook this very essential point. They think of bankers as princely potentates who grant or refuse credit at their pleasure, out of the immense funds at their disposal. But they cannot expend anything at all, they cannot grant the smallest loan or overdraft to you or to me, until first a sufficient number of people have been persuaded to bring their money and confide it to the banker's care. As we urged before, the whole essence of successful banking is that it depends on complete confidence. It is very difficult to think that the nation at large would feel such confidence in Socialist banks, affiliated to a Bank of England controlled by Government, and subject to all the pressure and wire-pulling inseparable from such a position, as to rush gladly forward and

entrust their money to their care. True, you may reply grimly if you are a Socialist, that it would be a case of Hobson's choice; people would have to go to the Nationalized banks because there would be no other banks. And, you may add, that the habit of having a banking account and making payments by the convenient method of drawing cheques is so firmly established, that it would certainly continue for a time at least, unless people had their confidence too suddenly and ruthlessly shattered. This, no doubt, applies up to a certain point, and as regards the numbers of small current accounts where the minimum balance required to be kept at the bank is so low as to be negligible. But the tendency would undoubtedly be not to leave large sums on deposit, and indeed, so far as possible, not to lodge them at the banks at all, except for immediate payments, but to invest them instead in easily marketable securities; preferably foreign ones, as being out of reach of the predatory hands of the Socialist State!

One fundamental matter remains to be noticed. It has seemed worth while to answer these various points, since Mr. Shaw has raised them: but really it seems a work of supererogation! One is at a loss to know why on earth Mr. Shaw should bother at all about the poor man's supposed difficulties in getting loans and credits and advances for the development of his business! Why does he elaborate schemes for facilitating extensions of credit? What can it matter, on his theories, and with the Social system he hopes to bring about? It seems waste of time and labour to try and create a vast machinery which can only be needed as a temporary measure, and is shortly doomed to extinction! For, if we must all have equal incomes,

and are not allowed to save them, or invest them, or employ anyone productively with them, it is obvious that we shall have no businesses to develop, and consequently no need of capital or credits to develop them! It will not even matter much, financially speaking, that the people should lose confidence, since they will have nothing to confide. Morally it would be, of course, an unspeakable disaster. For suspicion in the human mind is like a pebble flung into a silent sea. No man can tell how far the waves it raises will reach, even when they are no longer perceptible to his finite senses; and no man can tell what results, in politics or common everyday conduct, the loss of faith and dawning of suspicion may produce. But here we are only talking about banking as banking, not about moral reactions. And it seems that in Mr. Shaw's new England, banking as at present understood would simply come to an end. There would be no issuing houses, for the issuing house is essentially a connecting link between industry and the investing public—between borrowers, that is to say, and people who are anxious to lend them capital for productive purposes. But in the society we are contemplating at Mr. Shaw's invitation, there would be no companies for the public to invest in, and no public with capital to invest! There would be instead one gigantic Investment Department, controlling the use of the savings compulsorily made for us by the State, working in conjunction with a Bank of England so-called, which would be merely an instrument for carrying out the Government financial business.

Sic transit gloria!

CHAPTER XIV

NATIONALIZATION OF COAL

COAL stands in such a special position that it has to be dealt with separately apart from the general question. Many people who are definitely anti-socialist and averse to the nationalization of industry in general, think a case can be made out for it with regard to coal, on account of its special conditions and difficulties.

The outstanding features of the coal industry in recent years are :

1. The loss of foreign markets and of our export trade, owing to a complicated variety of causes.
2. The inability of many mines to continue running except at a dead loss.
3. Their consequent inability to pay the wages demanded, and in some cases a living wage at all.
4. The vast number of men in the industry for whom there is, in fact, no work, and no prospect of work, except on totally uneconomic lines.
5. The very high price charged for coal to the consumer, which affects adversely the costs of so many other industries.

Mr. Shaw deals with No. 5 very fully in his chapter on our Shopping, though only from the point of view

of the domestic consumption of coal, not the industrial. He also just touches on No. 2 ; but the other points he leaves on one side. Still, it must be gratefully acknowledged, that in this matter of coal he does, for once, honour us with a serious argument, instead of indulging in a sort of war dance, with wild whoops and turning of somersaults ! And his argument is well worth following up. Indeed, I think he puts the case for nationalization very persuasively.

He explains that coal (like everything else, whether it be grown in a field, or dug from a mine or quarry, or made in a factory), is produced at a variety of different costs. Because some mines are cheap and easy to work, while others are difficult and expensive. Some fields are fertile, others less so. Some factories are conveniently situated, and others are more remote from transport, or power, or raw materials. The goods, in so far as they are identical, must when produced be sold at identical prices, for this is an admitted necessity of the market, as students of economics will recognize. The price will inevitably be fixed at sufficient to cover the cost of producing the last loaf or last sack of coals for which there is a real and effective demand : the Marginal loaf, or Marginal Sack, as economists call it. That means the cost of the loaf which comes from the poorest wheatfield, or the coal which comes from the dearest mine, provided only that people are so determined to have them, that they will pay the price necessary to evoke their production.

All this is perfectly true : no economist will deny it. In point of fact it is also true that for the last

few years a large part of the coal raised has actually been sold below the marginal cost of production, in the hope no doubt of keeping going till better times, and also of increasing the demand. But this does not alter the truth of the economic argument, which must undoubtedly prevail in the long run. As Mr. Shaw correctly states, the difference between the highest cost of production under the worst circumstances and the lower costs under more favourable circumstances, is called rent in the case of land and houses. He also says that though the difference of price where mines are concerned is called royalties, it is really just another name for rent. We are not so sure he is right about this. Even the highest royalty is such a fractional proportion of the cost of producing a ton of coal, that we should have thought the biggest part of the difference between greater and less costs in good or bad mines went, not in royalties, but in the profits or losses of the colliery companies. However, the point is not essential to his argument, which is that the underlying principle is the same, by whatever name it is called, and whoever gets the benefit of the difference. As he points out, rent is part of the price of practically everything that has a price at all, with the exception of things that are communized. And he tells us—what we are naturally inclined to believe—that it is very hard on us to have to pay for our coals the full cost of getting them from the very dearest mines in use, though only a small proportion of the supply comes from these, while better mines are making excessive profits at our expense. He calls this a monstrous imposition which keeps us poor in a rich country. Please note that I am not endorsing all these expressions of opinion! But I am quite

ready to agree that it is very hard! The important question is whether it is inevitable.

Mr. Shaw says it is not. "The remedy here is, of course, the Postmaster-General's plan of averaging." And he explains that, if the mines were nationalized under a Coalmaster-General, just as the P.M.G. now averages the cost of sending letters either to the next terrace or to the ends of the earth, and so is able to charge only a penny ha'penny for each, so the C.M.G. would average the dear and the cheap coal, and sell to the public for an average all-round price, far lower than the present one, which, as we have seen, has to cover the cost at the worst mine.

Now one must admit that all this sounds very simple and very attractive, and I am free to confess that if that were the whole story it would be difficult to gainsay it. But it is not the whole story. There are other things and most important things to be considered, which we may find put an altogether different complexion on the matter.

In the first place the mines are *not*, admittedly, public but private property, and, as Mr. Shaw sapiently points out, it would ruin the whole scheme to confiscate. "Never," he says (p. 271), "advocate expropriation without compensation, unless you are opposed to nationalization, and are subtle enough to see that the surest way to defeat it is to advocate its being carried out vindictively." No, private property must be bought by the nation in honourable fashion, at a full fair price. (How this will affect the cost of coal to the consumer we must consider later.)

But *" do not let this trouble you at all," says Mr. Shaw in effect, " for I will let you into a secret and show you a trick worth two of confiscation. You will compensate fully and fairly, of course, but you will not pay for this yourselves. You will raise the necessary compensation by taxing the owners of the very property which is to be nationalized." And he gives as an illustration the following imaginary case (see p. 269) :

> " Suppose the Government wants a piece of land of the market value of £1,000 ! Suppose it raises that sum, not by taxing the nation, but by taxing the incomes of a hundred rich landlords, including the owner of the piece of land, making each of them contribute £10. The Government then takes the piece of land, and solemnly hands £1,000 to its former owner, telling him that he has nothing to complain of, as he has been paid the full market value of his land, instead of having it violently wrested from him in a revolutionary manner, as the Bolshevists took the land from the Russian landlords in 1921. Nothing can be more reasonable and constitutional and customary : the most Conservative Government might do it : in fact (*except for the substitution of all the landlords for a hundred selected ones*) Conservative Governments have done it over and over again."

Mr. Shaw seems to think the exception I have italicized a trifling and unimportant one, but, of course, it

* This is not a verbatim quotation, but a condensation of Mr. Shaw's argument, but I think he will admit it gives his meaning quite accurately.

vitally affects the whole procedure in principle as well as practice.

The flaw in the argument as applied to the Nationalization of Coal, is that Mr. Shaw proposes that the nation should acquire *not one mine but all the mines!* If therefore he taxed all owners to buy each other out, so to speak, at full market value, the result would be so evidently a cent per cent levy, such absolutely stark confiscation, naked and unashamed, that it would be just as impossible a measure to carry as Mr. Shaw himself sees avowed confiscation to be.

If, seeing this, he modified his plan a little, and taxed not coal owners only but the owners of all forms of property above a certain minimum level, in order to buy the mines for the nation, all these people would have their purchasing power and employing power so seriously curtailed and diminished that the immediate result could not fail to be a notable decrease in national wealth. This would be accompanied by a vast increase of national unemployment, with all the misery that entails, and a further heavy drain on the public for unemployment and poor-law relief on a gigantic scale. In addition to this, if, as many people expect, there is an immense development in the future use of oil and other forms of fuel, and consequent decrease in the demand for coal, the purchase of the mines might turn out a very bad investment for the nation. These things must be faced, and cannot be brushed aside as imaginative or negligible. It is of interest to note in this connection that it was the declared intention of the scheme laid before the Samuel Commission, which the Labour party

definitely accepted in its Birmingham Conference, that " the industry will be required to pay its way. There will be no question of Parliament granting subsidies."—(Samuel Commn. Evidence ; Tawney ; Memo. 5, para. 47.) It was further stated that the service of the debt created by the issue of Nationalization bonds should be a first charge upon the industry." What would this amount to ?

Let us imagine that a Socialist Government is in power, and that Mr. Shaw is Prime Minister. The Government has decided to nationalize the Coal Mines, but, mindful of its Leader's strong views against Confiscation, has determined to buy out the Coal Owners at the " fair market value " of their property. How much would it cost ? This is a very difficult question to answer, but the Samuel Commission (p. 67 of its Report) declared that " if the Mines and ancillary works were bought, Royalties paid for, wagons other than those belonging to Railway Companies purchased, and a moderate provision added for immediate development, the amount needed would probably not be less than £350,000,000." Assuming this estimate to be approximately correct, our imaginary Government is faced with the task of raising this vast sum. There are two ways in which they might do it. The obvious—and, it may be added,—the honest way would be to raise a Coal Loan for the required amount. The alternative would be to insist on the dispossessed owners themselves accepting payment, not in cash, but in Government bonds to the nominal amount of the purchase price. This second method savours strongly, of course, of partial confiscation, since it is very improbable that the

Coal Owners could sell their Bonds at par on the market, unless these carried an unusually high rate of interest. Let us however assume that, in one way or the other, Government has contrived to carry through its purchase by issuing bonds at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the rate now ruling for other Government securities. The interest charge on these bonds alone would amount to £$15\frac{3}{4}$ millions per annum.

That startles you, perhaps, but it is not the whole story. The British Coal Industry, paying the present rates of wages, and with its men working an eight-hour day, has been calculated to be losing money at the rate of £$11\frac{1}{2}$ million a year. Five million of this figure represents the Royalties, which the Industry would no longer have to pay, so we can deduct those, but we are still left with the annual loss of £$6\frac{1}{2}$ million, as well as the £$15\frac{3}{4}$ million, making a total of £$22\frac{1}{2}$ million, and even that makes no provision for paying off the Loan. All this enormous sum must be paid yearly by the taxpayers, and a Socialist Government would also be pledged to revert to the seven-hour day and improve the present conditions of coal production. How is it to be done ?

The accepted answer is, of course, that Nationalization would achieve a reduction in production costs of so stupendous a nature as to balance and more than balance the cost of acquiring the Mines. They would do this by concentrating control, avoiding cut-throat competition, reduplication, and other alleged wasteful incidents of private enterprise. It is said that the Coal Owners have allowed their plant to become obsolete, their machinery unscientific and old-

fashioned, and that they have failed to combine into large enough units to achieve economy in production. The remedy in short is not only to nationalize but to rationalize.

Well, there are few people who will not agree that a good deal of all this criticism has been deserved. Probably many of the Mine Owners would agree to it themselves. There have been good and bad among them, efficient and inefficient, as in all other industries, and some shining examples of good employers who stand out and would be notable in any industry. But, take it all round, their methods and organization have, in many cases, left much to be desired. That does not mean, however, that it would be wise or necessary to take extravagant measures in order to obtain improvement. There is no necessary connection between Nationalization and Rationalization. Admittedly, some form of combination and averaging there must be, in the interests of efficiency and therefore both of wages and prices. And such a system is being tentatively tried. Groups of mines are uniting, working together, and pooling their resources to a certain extent. In this way it is found possible to effect considerable economies, and to save some mines, only recently started perhaps, which need help in their present stages, but which may be very sound propositions later on. It is too soon to prophesy how far the experiment will succeed, but it is a hopeful one.

Nationalizers will say that Rationalization would proceed more rapidly under their system. There is no guarantee of that, but, even if it were so, it is not clear that this would be an advantage. Sometimes,

more haste less speed. The results of Rationalization in Germany, where it has been keenly pursued, are suggestive and not altogether satisfactory. Certainly there has been a great increase in output : one German authority has calculated it at 28 per cent., but, as against that he reckons that the cost of production has risen by over 47 per cent. In some cases a tendency is visible to turn back from the increased mechanization, and actually to reduce the number of machines. There are even some voices in the wilderness which warn us that the time is coming when amalgamation will be found to have gone too far and overreached itself, and a certain measure of disintegration may be found desirable in the interests of industrial efficiency. At all events, on the figures quoted above, even on the basis of the present eight-hour day, and without making any provision either for amortization of the Loan or for renewal of plant, it seems that the annual revenue of the coal industry would have to be increased by some 22 millions per annum (which would be approximately equivalent to an increase of 2s. per ton commercially disposable on an output of 250 million tons a year), before it would be possible to give the miners any increase in wages. Even the most ardent enthusiast for Nationalization may well pause, appalled before such a prospect, and consider anxiously whether the party that undertook it might not be like the man in the parable, who began to build without being able to finish !

Turn now to another factor, the question of management. We have seen that the " cheap management " of municipal enterprise, praised by Mr. Shaw, is often a very expensive economy. And mining is a very

technical, difficult and complicated business, because each mine is so different from others, and constitutes an individual problem of its own. We are assured, however, there is no need for anxiety on this score, as, of course, Government would take over all the mining experts and managers who were making a success of their mines, and leave them in their respective jobs, simply turning them from business and professional men into a branch of the Civil Service. But this does not dispose of the difficulty by any means. No one supposes that civil servants are individually any less able, honest and efficient, than people employed by private enterprise. But there is a necessary difference of system between a department of State, dealing with national money and responsible to Parliament, and a private business. It is claimed, rightly, I think, that the methods of the first inevitably militate against business success. It is not merely a question of removing the personal interest and motive, but the question of taking responsibility and making swift decisions of far-reaching importance. A private business can allow its manager to make such decisions, and take the risk that he may blunder, just because it is a private business ; but with a public undertaking it would be a different matter. I suppose the classic example of the slow cumbersomeness of bureaucratic methods is that of the Government of India as criticized by Lord Curzon when he first took up the Viceroyalty. Lord Ronaldshay, in his Biography, shows him to us groaning under the impossibility of getting anything done, under at least six months. No doubt under his vigorous domination things were vastly improved, but at the same time a great deal of extra caution and reference back to

higher officials, involving consequent delay, will always be inseparable from public business; and in industry and commerce a week or a day, or even an hour, may make the difference between profit and loss, success or failure. Indeed it has been wittily said that in business it is sometimes more important to do something at the right time, than to do the right thing some time!

All this, however, is only a small part of the matter. It is the considered opinion of all the experts who have studied the present tragic position of our coal fields, that a large number of the most unproductive, unremunerative mines *must be shut down.* They are frankly uneconomic. Why, then, do private owners continue to work them? Well, partly because it is a terrible responsibility and an acutely painful thing to throw a number of men out of work so long as it can possibly be avoided. And partly because owners having in time past invested much capital in these pits, and in recent years lost much income from them, have struggled to keep them going, in the hope of recouping some of their losses. But balance sheets are inexorable things! Year by year more of the worst mines are compelled by the logic of events to accept the inevitable and cut their losses. Finding themselves unable to pay their way, they close down. This is a tragic business for them, and far, far worse for the men they can no longer employ. But, economically, it is a blessing to the whole industry that they are gone. It enables the solvent mines to go ahead producing coal which they are able to sell at lower prices, and so keep their markets. The balance sheet is an indicator, as a thermometer might be in the

mouth of a fever patient. Or perhaps a better simile would be a barometer ! But, if you nationalize, you break your barometer !

The point is that when you have private control (unless there is a complete monopoly), the goods sell normally all over the market at the marginal price. The willingness of the public to buy coal at that marginal price is the barometer indication that there is a real effective demand for the product of the marginal mine. The central idea of Nationalization, as Mr. Shaw has shown, is, on the other hand, that the Coalmaster-General *averages* costs, and sells, not at the marginal price, but at a price half way between the marginal and the cheapest price. The fact that the public is willing to buy a given quantity of coal at this artificial price is no indication that there is a real " effective " demand for that amount, yet the old " marginal mine " continues in operation. The fact that you still, of course, run each mine's accounts separately, and know its costings, is immaterial to the argument, since at the artificial price a lot of mines would inevitably show a loss, although with sales at the higher marginal price they would show a profit. All the mines being pooled as national property and treated as one unit, it would in any case be very difficult for any Government to shut down an unecomonic mine and face the accusation of creating more unemployment. But, having broken the barometer, it becomes even more difficult, for the natural indication is destroyed, and the true position hidden or blurred. Nevertheless it will not pay the nation to maintain the uneconomic mine, which is really being subsidized out of the earnings of the others, and, indirectly, at the expense of other

industries, since the surplus which the good mine makes, instead of going to profits and being spent, or invested in other industries, is applied to subsidize the production of coal from the bad pits, for which there is no real effective demand. Another real though hidden effect is that the all-round costs are higher and therefore the average price to the consumer is also higher than it need be. Subsidies, supposed to avert disaster, nearly always aggravate it in industry.

There is yet another point to be considered, and that is the need for the cautious use and conservation of the coal-fields. Suppose Mr. Shaw's dream were realized, the mines seized under some thinly disguised form of confiscation, and the price of coal averaged under a Coalmaster-General. As we have seen, this would probably mean the continuance in operation of many uneconomic mines : the indicator would be destroyed, or at least camouflaged, and vast numbers of miners would be kept at work in an overstocked industry, really subsidized by the other workers of the country. Still we will assume that the price of coal would, for the time at least, be reduced. But would this be a good thing ? Remembering our swollen coal-bills and meagrely filled cellars, we are all naturally disposed to say yes ! But remember, Mr. Shaw has cautioned us (and in this he is surely right !) against the snare of allowing our personal feelings to upset our judgment ! (see p. 11). It is obvious that any considerable reduction in the price of a commodity in general use will, almost always, mean a large increase in the demand for it. Try to imagine a Government subsidy on such a scale as would bring down coal to 5/– a ton. We might all be ruined by having to pay for the subsidy, and be

forced to cut down our expenditure on food and clothing, thereby probably putting into a very bad way a host of butchers and bakers, woollen, and cotton and silk manufacturers, but it seems undeniable that we should indulge ourselves in a very free and luxurious use of coal ! One result of this would be that our coal reserves, already dwindling at a rather alarming rate, would be depleted still more rapidly. It is a quite justifiable retort that we have no security against this great evil under our present system of uncontrolled private ownership. But the higher, unsubsidized prices resulting from the free interplay of economic forces (supply and demand and substitution), do of themselves automatically check waste and act as a restraint on consumption. The development of other sources of power and light and heat, and the discovery of scientific methods of treating the crude coal so as to get its full value and save all the bye-products, have unquestionably been stimulated by the high price of coal.

One other argument against Nationalization ought not to be overlooked, though it can only be touched on here ; and that is the complications which it might and almost certainly would cause in our international relations. We can remember well enough the difficulties during and after the war, and the irritation produced in Europe against Britain, when the coal supplies and prices were even temporarily, and under quite exceptional circumstances, controlled by Government. If the case for Nationalization of the Mines were clear from the point of view of the producers and home consumers, instead of far otherwise, we might feel reluctantly compelled to go through with it ; but it would

still be impossible to view its possible repercussions on our foreign affairs without grave concern.

And now we have to look at the hardest, most cruel feature of the whole problem : the question of what is to be done with and for that immense army of miners and their families (not less than three quarters of a million of our population, men, women, and children), who by no fault of their own, but by sheer pressure of economic facts, have been thrown out of employment and deprived of their livelihood. If news comes of a mining disaster, lives lost, families deprived of their natural bread-winner, pity and horror are quickly kindled, and everyone rushes forward to give what help they can. But this disaster is on an infinitely greater and more tragic scale than any ordinary accident. The call to the nation's charity and sympathy, its spirit of good-will and practical helpfulness, is clear and urgent. It must be answered with a large ungrudging generosity, worthy of a great Empire and a Christian nation.

But when justice and pity have joined hands, and charity has given all it can, the problem still remains to be faced. What of the future ?

It is no use people saying that they are ready to work hard and loyally, but only in the place and at the work they choose. Is it not natural, you say, for people to be attached to their birth-place and their homes, and loath to leave them ? Yes, it is very natural. Parents love their children and hate to part with them, especially when it means letting them go far afield ! They do indeed, though mothers will generally put the

good of the child and his future prospects before their own private feelings. But the hard fact remains that *people must give their labour where it is wanted, and not where it is not wanted.* Not all the Government measures, inspired by the best intentions in the world, can alter this fact, though they may serve so to drape its harsh outlines and rub off its sharp corners that people do not recognize it and do not face the truth. Which is a cruel kindness, for the fact remains inexorable.

And the fact, in plain English, spells migration and emigration. They are not popular words with home-loving English folks to-day, but yet there is something warming in that thought of going where you are wanted, where you are needed, where you have something to give ! All down the ages the spur of hunger and the thirst for adventure have combined, and driven men and women of good courage across the seas, over the hills and far away, that they might inherit the earth !

They made habitations for themselves and their children before, and they will do so again. The time will come, indeed, when all the great waste places of the earth are filled, and we shall be forced to face in grim earnest the problem of keeping a static population. Unless we want to fall back on the ruthless natural means of war, pestilence and famine, we must find and use others. Reasonable birth-control ?—Yes. But the diminishing death-rate, especially of young children, and the increasing longevity of the old, counterbalances that to a great extent. Few people will venture to say that they consider this an undesirable thing, and that they would sooner see their babies

die than let them emigrate when they reach boy and girlhood! For, whatever happens in the future, that way of escape is still with us to-day, and we may be glad of it. Only, we must "send forth the best we breed!"

It is not only the miners who are confronted with this necessity. More and more we have to realize that innumerable goods and services which the whole world used to buy from Britain, they are now learning to produce for themselves. This is not a tendency which will grow weaker, but quite the contrary. The natural consequence must be that less and less shall we be able to find work and provide maintenance at home for our enormous population. This hits all, not one class only, as is evidenced by all the efforts made to send secondary and public-school boys and girls abroad. It is the principle of going where they are wanted, with them, as with the boys and girls of the elementary schools. Whether as farmers, labourers, domestic women-helpers, or in a hundred other spheres, there is still health and happiness and a decent living to be won by hard work and high hope and good courage, if only we accept whole-heartedly the maxim of service: "Not where we choose, but where we are wanted!"

CHAPTER XV

RENT OF ABILITY

In the last part of the preceding chapter we seem to have strayed away somewhat from Mr. Shaw, and almost forgotten him in our interest in some of the more urgent practical aspects of the Mines question! But, with apologies for the digression, we must now return to him. We will take a rest from the difficult and controversial problems of Nationalization. I hope I have convinced all my sisters that these matters are, at any rate, not so simple and one-sided as Mr. Shaw would have us believe; with all the sheep and the sensible people in one camp and all the goats and the idiots in the other! But no woman can make up another woman's mind for her, if it is worth making up at all! Only her own thoughts and personal experience—which she may be quite unable to translate into words by the way—can do that. What one may do, and I think ought to do, is to present the issue fairly and squarely, and put forward such arguments as one sincerely believes to be sound.

We will turn to Mr. Shaw's very interesting chapter on the rent of ability. Just as there are differences in the fertility of various pieces of land, and the price of these differences is called rent, so, evidently, there are differences in the fertility of brains, and economists

have agreed to call the price paid for these, " rent of ability."

That these differences in ability do actually exist is a point that needs no belabouring. The most convinced believers in equality have to face it and reckon with it. It jumps to the eye, and a very good thing it is too ! People are apt to quote the proverb : " It takes all sorts to make a world," in a spirit of kindly tolerant indulgence, almost of pity ; as if they made allowance for these differences, and knew they could not be helped, but still regretted them. But what a misfortune it would be if everyone had—not of course identical gifts and tastes, for no one in their senses could wish anything so tiresome as that—but equal abilities and capacities ! For then there would be talkers and no listeners, performers but no audiences, people to make plans and give orders but nobody to carry them out, and the whole economy of the world would be thrown out of gear. One sees something of the same confusion of thought in many people with regard to popular elementary education. There seems a vague feeling that its object is to screw all children up to a certain level of attainment and pump a given amount of instruction and knowledge into them, and that it is a success or a failure according to how far it accomplishes these ends. Instead of this, of course, the true object of all real education is to draw out children's natural capacities without unduly forcing them, and put them into touch with as wide a circle of healthy interests as possible. In this way a " good education " enables them to make the best of their life from the point of view of their own happiness, and the best contribution they can to the general wealth and welfare. If thought of in this way,

it will be seen how futile is the common discussion as to whether a particular child is " worth " educating, or " capable of profiting " by education. Naturally, he or she may be quite unsuited to some particular type of education, but all children should have the chance of full development and self-realization, quite irrespective of their different degrees and kinds of ability.

Admitting, then, the natural differences of ability, the question is as to what, if any, form of payment should be made to their owners by those who are using and profiting by them. Mr. Shaw represents the late Mr. Mallock as taking it as a matter of course " that the proper use of cleverness in this world is to take advantage of stupid people, to obtain a larger share than they of the nation's income." He goes on : " Rascally as this notion is, it is too common to be ignored. The proper social use of brains is to increase the amount of wealth to be divided, not to grab an unfair share of it." (See p. 331.) The words " *unfair* share " again cloud the issue and beg the question, which is whether the share claimed is, in fact, fair or unfair, expedient or inexpedient. But Mr. Shaw, presumably, means an *unequal* share. His condemnation applies to those who, using their superior brains to create new wealth (which we shall all agree with him is their right social function), claim a direct reward for their services, apart from the reward of feeling with satisfaction that they have done a good piece of work, and possibly deriving some fractional advantage in their dividend from the increased national wealth.

This needs careful looking into. Let us see how Mr. Shaw deals with different concrete examples.

First of all he takes the possessors of delightful personal talents, like his own, or, say, some great actress's or *prima donna's*, who can and do make large fortunes out of the happy accident of their gift. It seems clear that if Mr. Shaw is consistent he certainly ought to condemn these, but to our great surprise he does not do so! He says indulgently that these cases need not worry us, because they are so few! (We seem to hear echoes of Captain Marryat, and recall a celebrated defence in "Midshipman Easy" of an illicit baby on the ground that it was "only a little one!") But are they so few? We grant readily that talents on a par with Mr. Shaw's, or Albani's, or Sarah Bernhardt's, are excessively rare. But there are infinite degrees in such things, and the possession of a marketable personal talent is not a rare thing, but one of the commonest in everyday experience. Once the principle is admitted it is impossible to say that what is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander: that great geniuses may take their reward with a clear conscience, but the small fry must not! Yet this, in effect, is what Mr. Shaw does say. He admits that, as things are at present arranged, any possessor of a special gift or charm, who coins money with it, can buy land and industrial incomes with his spare money, and so become a landlord and a capitalist. (Mr. Shaw himself is, of course, both—he tells us so—p. 104). And this he thinks is wrong. But, under Socialism, that resource would be cut off. And, apart from it, he sees nothing to fuss about in his own or similar cases, because, he says, their wealth would then not confer either industrial power or political privilege. He doubts whether under any system anyone would grudge them their extra spending money. "Any attempt by the Government to tax it so as to

reduce us to the level of ordinary mortals would probably be highly unpopular, because the pleasure we give is delightful and widespread, whilst the harm we do by conceit and tantrums and jealousies and spoiltness, is narrowly limited to the unfortunate few who are in personal contact with us. A prima donna with a rope of pearls ten feet long and a coronet of Koh-i-noors does not make life any worse for the girl with the string of beads who, by buying a five shilling ticket, helps to pay for the pearls : she makes it better by enchanting it." (p. 332.)

This astonishing conclusion (astonishing not because we necessarily disagree with the argument, but as coming from a Socialist who has declared his settled conviction that all the evils of the world have their origin in unequal incomes !) leaves us breathless. We rub our eyes and wonder whether this is just an extreme instance of the Shavian method, or purely Gilbertian ! Surely we remember that on page 22 of this same book Mr. Shaw has pointed out with eloquence, in regard to this very same matter, comparing popular actresses with poorly paid sempstresses, all the objections there are to it. " A division in which one woman gets a shilling and another three thousand shillings for an hour of work has no moral sense in it : it is just something that happens and that ought not to happen. A child with an interesting face and pretty ways and some talent for acting, may, by working for the films, earn a hundred times as much as its mother can earn by drudging at an ordinary trade. What is worse, a pretty girl can earn by vice far more than her plain sister can earn as an honest wife and mother."

I have thought it worth while to quote these two paragraphs at length, because they are an illuminating example of Mr. Shaw's inconsistency of argument, which it behoves us, my dear sisters, to be on our guard against. Unless you happen to have such an amount of leisure combined with such an insatiable intellectual appetite that you have been able to devour this handy little guide of Mr. Shaw's in boa-constrictor-like gulps, you will probably have read it gradually, bit by bit, over a considerable period of time. In that case you may reasonably be forgiven if you have forgotten, when you are reading page 333, what you previously read some hundreds of pages earlier! (One is reminded of the song: "What did Winston Churchill say in 1899?") It is even possible that you may not have read the great work straight through, but just dived and dipped into it, and skimmed off what appeared to interest you particularly! This is not commendable, but it is perhaps excusable in a volume that runs into two hundred thousand words! But, in either case, you will very probably be left with a generally dazzled impression that Mr. Shaw has found an answer for everything, and you will modestly take it for granted that of course his brilliant answers are mutually compatible! It would be nearer the truth to say that Mr. Shaw has found a conclusive answer to nothing, and that when he appears to have found a fairly satisfactory answer to something, it is in direct opposition to another of his answers. This is extremely unfair to you, his readers, who cannot be expected to unravel his labyrinthine maze with no assurance that he has given you the clue, or even that there is any way out!

Take the paragraphs I have quoted. Some of you may

have special sympathy with over-worked and underpaid sempstresses, and very strong feelings against anything that even borders on sweated labour. I have myself! Others may be peculiarly alive to the moral dangers to which public entertainers and popular favourites are particularly exposed. Others again, having a remarkable gift of their own, feel the full force of the arguments in favour of their being allowed to reap a remarkable reward for exercising it! And yet others will think all these discussions as to personal gifts and their payment rather silly waste of time, and that what good socialists ought to concentrate on is simply the public ownership of all the ordinary instruments of production. The point I want to make is that anyone of you who delve into the book at a venture, can produce an argument which seems to supply you with what you need, quite unaware of the other things Mr. Shaw has said in another chapter which contradict it!—still more, of course, of all the facts and arguments which he omits to notice altogether.

Personally I, not being a Socialist or a Communist, and having no "yearnings for equal division of unequal earnings," agree with Mr. Shaw that nobody is likely to grudge him the extra spending money which his good brains and hard work have earned for him! I do not know him personally, but I have no reason to doubt that he spends it wisely and generously as a good citizen should! But I do not at all agree with the harmlessness of the *prima donna's* supposed reckless extravagance and luxurious personal expenditure. As a bad example, and also a cause of envy and unrest, and a spur to foolish attempts at imitation, it probably does infinite harm. And though I see no means of

checking it by any Acts of Parliament, but only by the slow growth of better education and a better sense of values, yet it seems that all good citizens should disapprove and discourage such senseless and tasteless displays, as far as possible : certainly not excuse and endorse them as Mr. Shaw appears to do.

Our Guide next draws a distinction between those who can earn large amounts by the exercise of a personal popular talent (which he allows) and those whose personal talent it is to make money out of other people's talents. That, he says, is gravely different, and we gather that he could not countenance it. " To allow Cleopatra to make money out of her charms is one thing : to allow a trader to become enormously rich by engaging five hundred Cleopatras at ten pounds or less a week, and hiring them out at ten pounds a day or more is quite another." Put in this language, suggesting as it does the methods of a procurer and house of ill fame, Mr. Shaw's example is frankly revolting. If he really means this, we can only answer that Mrs. Warren's profession is an illegal profession, and that if and where it is being practised the police should interfere. But if what he has in mind is the case of a man of business organizing some public entertainment, theatrical or otherwise, and engaging hundreds of young actresses and chorus girls for the performance, we cannot for the life of us see the force or logic of his argument.

Consider a little. If the young ladies are worth more than ten pounds a week, then certainly they ought to be paid more. But in that case they will probably have a shrewd notion of their own market value, and

stand out for it. Also, as business enterprise is always eagerly on the look-out for first-class talent, most organizers will be only too glad to welcome it and pay accordingly. But if this is not so ; if the girls find they are being exploited and cannot get fair terms, their obvious course is to join their Trade Union, which will doubtless take the matter up and see that they are rightly treated. On the other hand, granting that the terms are fair and reasonable, what is the objection to the transaction ? Not that they get less than their due, but that the organizer's talent is rarer and more remunerative, and so he gets more ? That is what it comes to ! Albani, with a fortune in her throat and an established reputation, can, no doubt, dictate terms. But the five hundred young ladies whom Mr. Shaw refers to have probably only minor talents, which would not by themselves command an audience. Also they are quite unknown, and have no means of marketing their gift, otherwise they would, of course, make use of them. So they are helpless. Then comes the organizer, with a *flair* for business. He sees their possibilities, and devises a combination in which each can play a small part, use her talent for what it is worth, and receive a proportionate reward. How are they robbed or injured ? To an unbiassed observer the organizer appears deserving of their gratitude, as well as that of the public for whom he is providing fresh wealth of pleasure, IF—and it is a very important IF —he is a fair employer, a straight dealer, who really does pay them the share of the product to which their contribution reasonably entitles them. Too often this is not the case : there is unfair dealing and exploitation. If only Mr. Shaw would concentrate on these real abuses, and seek remedies for them, instead of trying

to do away with all employment of talent by which the employers as well as the employees make money, we cannot but think he would be more usefully occupied. As it is, the talented but unbusinesslike people, who rely on professional organizers to give them an opportunity, naturally view his ideas and well-meant efforts with alarm and dismay.

I have chosen the case involving actresses and chorus girls, or workers for the films, because it is one that specially lends itself to misrepresentation and misunderstanding. But exactly the same principle applies to the literary profession. Mr. Shaw or Mr. Wells writes a book and can command a sum that may run into thousands of pounds before a single copy of it is sold. But crowds of unknown young authors, eagerly aspiring to fame but with no prestige and no capital, are obviously in a very different position. They look anxiously about for an enterprising publisher who will believe in their talent and back it! It is of course the most speculative business imaginable—just a gamble on the new writer's chances of success. The publisher may spot a winner and reap a rich reward, or he may, not once but many times over, be seriously out of pocket. In any case Young Hopeful has had his chance, and, if he feels that his contract was a fair one, he will have no grievance against the publisher who took the risk of giving it to him, and who has made money out of his brains! If he thinks, rightly or wrongly, that the contract is *not* a fair one, but is exploiting his necessity or his ignorance, there are Author's Associations ready and anxious to advise him on this very point for the payment of a small fee.

The next point made by Mr. Shaw is that exceptional ability *NEEDS no payment of rent to evoke its activity*. The owners of special gifts are compelled by the law of their being to desire to exercise them, and even the most severe discouragement or punishment will not restrain them from trying to do so (p. 339). This is probably true up to a point, but only up to a very limited point. If Mr. Shaw means that a person who has the literary instinct will insist on producing books whether or no he is paid a living wage for them, he is doubtless correct. But this generalization will not carry him very far. The divine necessity of creation and self-expression may and no doubt will make a *prima donna* sing when she wants to, whether she is paid for it or not, and that will be very nice for those who happen to be within hearing at the inspired moment : but it will not make her sing when she is indisposed ! At present an author contracts to hand over his manuscript within a certain time : an actress or a singer contracts to perform in public on certain fixed dates. Short of physical disability, guaranteed by a medical certificate, they must fulfil their agreement on these occasions, however great their disinclination, which may be based on the most excellent reasons. Why ? Because they desire to draw the rent of their ability ; and they know that if they fail to fulfil their obligations, whether or not they are sued for breach of contract, they will not easily get other engagements, and so will suffer loss. But if in no case were they to draw any extra payment for the exercise of their talent but merely the ordinary civil allowance payable to all citizens, whether actors, archbishops, or artizans, why should they put themselves out ? You may say that, Socialist Government notwithstanding, the law would

still be the law, and people would have to abide by a binding contract or pay the legal penalty. But why should they sign irksome contracts if no corresponding reward is held out as an inducement ? Mr. Shaw seems to think this will work out all right, because their duty as superior brains is to increase the general wealth of the world, and also because the " urge " of their creative talents will impel them to perform. But can he really think such a diffused and general motive would keep people's noses to the grindstone, and induce them to sing, or act, or write, or organize some business enterprise, day after day and night after night, when they were suffering from toothache, or disappointed love, or perhaps desired a space of leisure for their honeymoon ? Remember that short of imprisonment for failure to perform their State-allotted task there is no pressure that could be brought to bear upon them, because under Mr. Shaw's scheme they cannot forfeit their right to an equal share of the national dividend and become poor : that would defeat the whole plan of campaign.

Among the many things that Mr. Shaw conveniently ignores is the notorious fact that creative talent is often allied with marked distaste to regular work, which prevents its exercise, even when that is manifestly to the owners' interest. Sheridan, to choose someone of Mr. Shaw's own profession of playwright, is an instance very much to the point. We remember how he would put off and put off writing a play he had promised and indeed already sold ; until his publisher in despair kidnapped him after a fashion, locked him into a room supplied with food and drink (especially drink, if tradition tells a true tale !) and

kept him there until he had completed his undertaking. Less erratic geniuses will not push matters quite so far as this. The pressure of economic necessity compels them to fulfil their engagements even when they are not legal contracts, more or less up to time, but if that pressure and the motive of personal advantage were removed, it is certain that many of them would fail to do so. Mr. Shaw speaks vaguely of simple coercion instead of extra pay overcoming reluctance to perform civic duties. But though this may answer when it is a case of the occasional performance of some office such as sitting on a jury, which he cites, it has evidently no bearing on the question under discussion, viz., the desirability or otherwise of paying rent for special ability.

The conclusion forced upon us is the same as that we came to when considering the differences between various kinds of work (Chapter 5. " Equality of Work") and the greater or less number of people capable of performing them adequately. It is to the nation's interest to induce every person to make his or her full contribution to the creation of wealth, by labour of hand or brain, and to pay as much as is necessary to enable them to do this while keeping in a good state of health, mentally and bodily, and bringing up a family to succeed them, and saving fresh capital to replace what has been spent ; but not more than is necessary. Specially it is the national interest to evoke the exercise of those special abilities, whether in art or business, which cannot be compelled but on which so much of progress depends ; and to see that laziness or inertia do not slow down the pace or stop the wheels altogether. The only method so far found effective, not

for an occasional spurt but to induce steady continuous effort, is the reasonable method of offering a sufficiently attractive reward, not to be appropriated by the nation at large, but awarded to the individual.

But, Mr. Shaw says, no difficulty of this kind arises in what he rather confusingly calls the socialized services (see p. 340). By these he seems to mean the Army and Navy, the Church and the Law; what in fact are usually called the learned professions and the fighting forces of the Crown. But he does not appear to be correct in his statements about them. He tells us that the most extraordinarily able judge, or civil servant, or naval captain, or field-marshal, or archbishop, get no more *than those of their rank and seniority*,* who may have no outstanding abilities. Surely this is putting the cart before the horse. The very fact that a man has reached any of the ranks Mr. Shaw mentions, is itself the indication that, rightly or wrongly, he is supposed to possess outstanding qualifications in his profession. If he does not, we can only conclude that a bad selection has been made, but we certainly cannot infer that there is no intention to pay rent for ability. The rank, with its attendant great increase of income, is the recognised reward. If there were no such distinctions we should expect to see subalterns and generals, middies and admirals, curates and bishops, stipendiary magistrates and High Court Judges, exercising different functions indeed, but all drawing the same salaries! The logical conclusion from Mr. Shaw's chapter on "Distribution by Class" (pp. 36–38) is

* The italics are mine.

that he would prefer this arrangement, but there can be no pretence that it exists, nor will many people think it would be practicable.

Mr. Shaw writes a good deal about the rent of ability as displayed in capitalistic commerce, but beyond remarking that the latter forces people to be cads, he does not seem to be very lucid here, or definite as to his own conclusions. It is a peculiarly important branch of the subject. Probably for one person engaged in art or literature, or employed in Government service, there are a thousand or more occupied in some kind of business. In cases where a personal charm or popular talent is in question, the instinct of self-display, the lure of vanity, and the glamour of public applause, might possibly induce some people for a certain time to forego the rent of their ability. But in business there are no clapping audiences, no bouquets handed up across the footlights, no laudatory reviews —at all events, not in the early stages of a career ! Step by step the unusual business ability makes itself felt and works its way up, by sheer hard work and powers of leadership and management, till it emerges from the rut, and its possessor becomes, perhaps, what we call a " Captain of Industry." But the work is very exhausting ; the drudgery very constant and relentless. Does any reasonable person imagine that the mere desire to exercise their gifts of organization would induce men and women to go through long years of it without the prospect—the hope at least—of a generous reward ? Mr. Shaw himself imagines the able organizer and financier saying in answer to criticisms on the share he takes of the product : " Even if you have to pay me a large share of the increase due to my ability,

you are still far richer than if you did without me." And to this, says Mr. Shaw, there is no reply. To his pregnant comment there seems nothing left for us to add.

Please note, my dear sisters, both Socialist and Capitalist, that this does not mean that your able financier is necessarily a nice man, or a good citizen ! That will depend on quite different critieria. If you want an answer with regard to that point in any individual case, you must ask three questions : how he made his money ? how he treated the people who helped him to make it ? and how he spent it when it was made ?

But the fact that he created wealth, earning much for himself and his family, and enabling others to earn also, will not, in our view, be presumptive evidence that he is a cad ! On the contrary, we think it a valuable, honourable piece of citizen work, as essential to the public welfare as most others that could be named.

CHAPTER XVI

"GRADUALNESS" OR "SOCIALISM WITHOUT TEARS!"

In his chapter "The Constructive Problem Solved" (p. 297) Mr. Shaw tells us: "When you have the formula for these two nationalizations"—coal and banking—"you have a formula for all nationalizations. And when you have the formula for the constitutional compensated expropriation of the coalowners and bankers by taxation, you have the formula for the expropriation of all proprietors." But he warns us elsewhere (p. 274) that though "theoretically, nationalization is perfectly sound . . . practically it takes . . . a lot of doing." Leaping back, with the agility which a careful study of the Guide demands of us, we find this expounded at greater length on p. 97. "The first and last commandment of Socialism is: thou shalt not have a greater or less income than thy neighbour," but Mr. Shaw bids us note that before such a commandment could be even approximately obeyed, hundreds of new Acts of Parliament must be passed, and hundreds of old ones repealed, and many new Government Departments invented and organized. Without all these elaborate preparations, which, he sees clearly, would involve training innumerable people as public servants, educating children differently, and engaging in a long struggle with all the opposing

interests, Socialism could only be a name and not a fact. As he pertinently says, what could a Socialist Government, elected by no matter how large a majority, do when confronted by a starving woman who asked for work and not charity, except confess that it had, alas! no job for her, and offer her a dole, "just as at present."

He makes, too, an illuminating admission on p. 288, when he says, with regard to changes and confiscations, that the question is always how far and how fast you can go without crashing. He lays it down as fundamental that Government must never tax at all unless it has an immediate use for the money it takes: "The rule . . . holds in every case." Another rule that he also declares "invariable" is that if an already established commercial industry or service is nationalized, Government must have a new public department ready to take the business over, and must compensate the owners from whom it takes it. We find the same theme elaborated in the chapters "Change must be Parliamentary" and "Preliminaries to Nationalization." And the burden of the argument is that none of these things which Mr. Shaw thinks ought to happen —equality of incomes and of work and all the rest of it—can possibly happen for a long, long time! Unless, indeed, they are so hashed and bungled and foolishly forced upon a world unready for them, that they are certain to provoke a counter revolution. And revolutions, as Mr. Shaw wisely observes (p. 283), do not nationalize anything, and often make it much more difficult to nationalize.

All this appears incontestably true, and it is

difficult to avoid the impression that Mr. Shaw is himself sensibly relieved by the fact ! All through the pages of his book we seem to hear him breathe an almost audible sigh of relief as he demonstrates the "inevitableness of gradualness," and considers that he is pretty sure to be safely out of the way before the great day dawns. He may—we are sure he does—most sincerely believe that Socialism is the right thing, and Equal Incomes, too—so long as these are not unduly pressed, or too rigorously enforced against creative artists ! But there is no hint anywhere of the poignant regret at the long postponement of the hoped-for Golden Age, which we should have thought an ardent enthusiast for Socialism ought to feel ! True, he does remark temperately that : "It is a great pity the change cannot be made more quickly" (p. 392). But he immediately consoles himself by recalling the forty years spent in the wilderness by the children of Israel, after being delivered by Moses from their bondage to Egypt. And he compares our situation with theirs, we being wanderers in the desert between Commercialism and Socialism. He reflects : "It is well that we who are hopelessly unfitted for Socialism by our bringing-up will not live for ever." (But does he not rather mean : "It is a mercy we shall not live to see it" ?) And he goes on to say that those who dread the change may comfort themselves by the assurance that there is more danger of its coming too slowly than too fast. We should be sorry to do Mr. Shaw an injustice, but we seem to read between the lines of this paragraph that he is administering reassurance to himself as well as to others ! At all events, he expressly states (pp. 98–9) that "it is one thing to understand the aim of Socialism and quite another to carry it into

practice, or even to see *how it can or ever could be carried into practice!*" (the italics are mine). And he concludes: "Should you become a convert to Socialism you will not be committed to any change in your private life, nor indeed will you find yourself able to make any change that would be of the smallest use in that direction."

Well, it is a comfortable doctrine for Socialists who have something to lose! The last bit of it, as to the ineffectiveness of individual effort in bringing about a social revolution may, perhaps, in a certain sense, be true; but as to the rest we are not persuaded. Surely Mr. Shaw overlooks the dynamic force of example in carrying conviction as to the truth of our convictions! We may fully agree with him that Socialism is not to be conceived of as a charitable enterprise for the benefit of the poor: that it "loathes almsgiving" and "abhors poverty" and "poor people as such"; and would abolish, not relieve, the condition. We may, and do, agree that a rich woman can no more help being born rich than a poor woman can help being born poor, and has no reason to feel guilty and ashamed of her wealth; (so long, we would add, as she uses it well!) And we most certainly agree that both patrons and paupers are often unpleasant persons, giving and receiving in a spirit that cannot be respected or admired. Nevertheless, Mr. Shaw himself alludes in a beautiful passage to the great poverties of St. Francis and his like, and to the deep truth that to be acceptable they must be voluntary. It is a fact that Socialists do profess to feel a specially burning sympathy with the sufferings of the poor, and since they admit—at all events Mr. Shaw admits—that the

change of political and industrial system which they believe in as the remedy cannot " come in our time," but only very slowly and gradually, their hearts must be wrung. It is difficult not to wonder a little that they should feel themselves absolved from " making any change in their way of life " if only as a moral gesture. (I am alluding, of course, for the moment, only to those of them who happen to be rich and leisured people.) Some feelings are instinctive, and cannot be overcome by any process of rationalization. The attitude suggested as the correct one by Mr. Shaw seems analogous with that of a woman who takes the extreme view about alcohol—not the temperance but the teetotal, prohibition view : that it is a thing accurst ; to be touched not, tasted not, handled not : and who yet continues to draw dividends from distillery shares, on the plea that her selling them would not stop the distillery or hurt its prosperity ! So, in the same way, one cannot avoid a vague feeling of discomfort at the idea of people who believe that unequal incomes are morally wrong and indefensible, and who yet, because admittedly they cannot bring about the Millennium by personal sacrifice, propose to continue enjoying the advantages they condemn, and " make no difference in their way of life " until the Millennium arrives !

Mr. Shaw's position in the matter of the " when " of Socialism reminds us of the story of the Irishman who evinced distress on being told that Home Rule would shortly be an accomplished fact. Asked by the surprised Saxon : " But, surely, you told me you prayed every day for Home Rule ? " he replied that he did indeed pray, both that Home Rule might come and that he might go to Heaven, but he was not

anxious that either of these events should happen too quickly! If Mr. Shaw ever frames a prayer in connection with his avowed political creed, one cannot but think that the words instinctively rising to his lips must be: "Not in our time, O Lord!"

We do not, however, cast the smallest doubt on the absolute genuineness of Mr. Shaw's conviction that the gradual way is the only way, and that things cannot be hurried without disaster. Take one of the terse Shavian sayings, that convey a valuable platitude in an easily remembered form. "A nationalizing Government must be" not only stable and highly organized, but "also financially honest." (p. 275). We agree! And he is fair enough to admit that things are not always as they ought to be! He quotes the example of some State railways as models of all that is worst, both as to incompetence and dishonesty, thus leading to a popular clamour for their denationalization. He goes on to say, and probably with quite equal truth, that private enterprises have done as bad or worse. What he fails to see, or at all events does not comment on, is that the misdeeds of a private company are infinitely less important to a great society than the misdeeds of its own Sovereign Government. The private companies are either small affairs, responsible to and ruining their own voluntary shareholders only, or, if they are great concerns like the railways (which by analogy he has presumably in mind), they can be punished by an outraged State, which has granted them their charter on certain conditions. But if the State is itself the sinner, the position is quite otherwise, and the complicating

difficulties, as well as the public demoralization, are great. Who is to chastise Cæsar ?

Mr. Shaw has written an amusing and delightful chapter on Current Confusions, in which he repudiates Direct Action and condemns Syndicalism—the Mines for the Miners, and the Shops for the Shop Assistants ! —with all the humour which makes him such tremendous fun to read. And when he talks of " our Tower of Babel, where our confusion of names prevents us from finishing the social edifice," we are in complete agreement with him. But we cannot forget the proverb : Physician, heal thyself, and wish he had himself been more scrupulous in the use of terms. For instance, if he must use the names Socialist and Communist interchangeably, he might at least have given us his reasons and a definition. But whatever else may be cloudy or evasive in these discussions, Mr. Shaw is always clear on one point, that : It's a long, long way to Tipperary !

Lest, however, this conviction, comfortable or distressing, according to our point of view, should make any of us think our vote on one side or t'other a matter of indifference, we must bear in mind that we are given to understand the immediate programme of any Socialist Government would inevitably include the " thousand million Budget," and the Nationalization of some of the most important industries. What this experiment might mean in its results as to unemployment, decrease of national wealth, and increase of national burdens, is so terribly serious that we cannot act light-heartedly, relying on Mr. Shaw's assurance that it cannot be in our time, and that we hope " it

will be all right on the night ! " We fear, on the contrary, that it would be all wrong ! At all events, it is a safe maxim that no one should vote except with a clear visualization of what the effect of their vote, if carried into action, would be, and a real desire that that result should be accomplished, not in some far by-and-by, but here and now.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME SHAVIAN CONTRADICTIONS

One cannot but feel that G. B. S.'s brilliance is, in a sense, the enemy of his solid achievement—not, of course, in the literary but in the sociological sphere. He seems temperamentally unable to resist the temptation to score a point on any and every side, and will always abandon a position for the sake of a pose or a paradox. Perhaps it is because Mr. Shaw so dislikes and despises people in general, that he cannot bear to find himself in agreement with them! As soon as they have been persuaded to accept his point of view in some matter, he seems to feel uneasy, and unable to rest until he has demonstrated that they do not really see things as he does! So he manages to get into the Opposition again, and back to the guerrilla warfare that really suits him. He hits out equally at all parties, Labour, Liberal or Conservative, and, of course, at the whole party system, which is, to be sure, an easy target for wit. It is no wonder that Mr. G. H. D. Cole complains plaintively in the *Daily Herald* that his fellow Socialists have never quite known where to have him! He is "a bit of a puzzle" to them, and, we are inclined to think, some of them must regard him as their *enfant terrible*. It is true there is a pleasing side to this. He makes such "very palpable hits" that we can none of us help laughing.

As one reader remarked : " It seems a shame to answer him seriously, because, though of course it is awful rot, still it's such fun, and one does enjoy it so ! " If Mr. Shaw were a lesser person one might be content to leave it at that, but not when one is dealing with the great central figure of the Fabian Society. The fact is that he has a genius for side-tracking a main issue, and scoring triumphs in matters that are either irrelevant to it, or that concern merely minor details. But when one comes back patiently to the real difficulty under discussion, as people who are seriously concerned needs must do, one finds that he has failed to carry sober conviction. The impression left on the mind is that of a versatile counsel, who could and would have argued equally plausibly on either side, for the prosecution or the defence, according as to which party had briefed him. It is not the effect produced by a wise, truth-loving judge, directing a jury so that they may have full assistance in weighing all the different evidence and conflicting arguments, before they pronounce their verdict. Yet that is the rôle which Mr. Shaw sets out to fill for us in this book, addressing us—the intelligent women in the street—as those who are going to form a large part of the jury in all future political cases.

It is well, therefore, to call your attention to some of his curiously contradictory sayings, and incompatible attitudes. First, let us notice his opinions as expressed on p. 148 with regard to over-population and emigration. After discussing, entirely from one point of view, the very difficult question of the rights and wrongs of investing capital out of the country, to which we must refer presently, he goes on to say :

"At this point Capitalism becomes desperate, and quite openly engages in attempts to get rid of the unemployed: that is to empty the country of part of its population, which it calls over-population. How is it to be done? As the unemployed will not let themselves be starved, still less will they let themselves be gassed or poisoned or shot, which would be the logical Capitalist way out of the mess. But they can perhaps be induced to leave the country and try their luck elsewhere if the Government will pay their fare or as much of it as they cannot scrape up for themselves. . . . That would be cheaper than keeping them at home on the dole. Thus we see Capitalism producing the amazing and fantastic result that the people of the country become a drawback to it, and have to be got rid of like vermin (polite people call the process Assisted Emigration), leaving nobody in it but capitalists and landlords and their attendants, living on imported food and manufactures in an elegant manner, and realizing the lady's and gentleman's dream of a country in which there is lavish consumption and no production . . . and contraception is in full swing to avoid any further increase in the population."

Now, if this astonishing caricature of facts means anything practical—anything, that is to say, beyond a palpable effort to create prejudice by the covert suggestion that the Capitalist way would be to starve, gas, poison, shoot, or otherwise destroy the unemployed!—it can only mean one thing. And that is that Mr. Shaw does *not* consider the country overpopulated—that he believes there is plenty of productive remunerative work for them in their own

country if only the wicked capitalists would give it to them to do—that he regards assisted emigration as a great evil, and looks upon birth-control as an outrage.

As to all these points everyone is, of course, entitled to their own opinion, but they cannot logically have it both ways at once. Yet this is what Mr. Shaw tries to do when, dealing with Socialism and Marriage, (p. 409) he begins to consider the population question seriously. Hear what he says then !

> "Marriage is for the State simply a licence to two citizens to beget children. To say that the State must not concern itself with the question of how many people the community is to consist of, and, when a change is desired, at what rate the number should be increased or reduced, is to treat the nation as no sane person would dream of treating a ferryman. If the ferryman's boat will hold only ten passengers, and you tell him that it has been revealed to you by God that he must take all that want to cross over, even though they number a thousand, the ferryman will not argue with you, he will refuse to take more than ten, and will smite you with his oar if you attempt to detain his boat and shove a couple more passengers into it. And, obviously, the ten already aboard will help him for their own sakes. . . . When Socialism does away with the artificial over-population, the State will be face to face at last with the question . . . of how many people it is desirable to have in the country. . . . In time all places comfortable enough to tempt people to emigrate get filled up. . . . We may have to discuss whether we should keep down" (our popula-

tion) "as we keep down the cat population, by putting the superfluous babies into the bucket. . . . The alternative would be to make it a severely punishable offence for married couples to have more than a prescribed number of children. . . . Any State limiting the number . . . permitted to a family, would be compelled not only to tolerate contraception but to inculcate it and instruct women in its methods. . . . A Socialist State is more likely to interfere than a Capitalist one."

You will note that in the above paragraph Mr. Shaw appears to recognize that over-population does exist, though of course he attributes it to Capitalism. Also that he now presents both emigration and birth control as things obviously necessary and desirable. You may prefer one view or the other, but you cannot choose both. And if children have to be limited, most people will prefer to restrict their own families (according to the principles which appeal to them) under the pressure of economic necessity rather than according to edicts of State, even coupled with the bribe (or is it a threat?), of equal incomes. As to emigration, even if it were true that the Capitalism of a hundred years ago, groping in the dark, as all were then about such questions, had produced our over-population, how would that affect the right and duty of a modern State to assist emigration? A statesman has to deal with facts as they are, regardless of whether the Industrial Revolution, or the Manchester School, or any other historical events or persons are responsible for the situation. When Mr. Shaw envisages his Socialist statesmen he admits this necessity and gives them his blessing, though evidently and inevitably

uncertain what they will do when the time comes, or what they ought to do. But with a Capitalist State it is different. Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with!

As to the question of sending capital out of the country, Mr. Shaw sees red on this point, though in his chapter on "Parasitic Paradises" he explains the countervailing advantages of more money coming into the country, as a result, than goes out. But he is quite entitled to point out that this does not settle the question of whether or no under existing conditions so much foreign investment is a healthy thing for the country. It is quite arguable that it is not. But one thing should not be overlooked. If Capital seeks employment out of the country rather than in it, obviously this is not because the owners perversely prefer to invest their money in Peru or Buenos Ayres instead of in Britain! Anyone would normally rather have his investment nearer home, where he could keep an eye on it with less trouble and expense, and without incurring foreign risks. If, in spite of these drawbacks, he still sends his money away, it can only be for one reason, namely that the home enterprises requiring capital are not profitable: that is to say they cannot pay him the normal market rate of interest on his loan and compensation for his risk. If the State confiscates his Capital and proceeds to invest it in these same enterprises, they will not therefore become profitable. It may indeed be that the nation so much needs the services which the enterprises would provide if carried through, that they will decide to run them, even at a loss. Well and good. Only let them remember that running any business at a loss inevitably means

a decrease in the sum total of wealth, and consequently in the incomes which are to be shared out from the national dividend. Yet at the same time the Socialist Party claims that it will raise and not lower the standard of life and level of wages. Again, how is it possible to have it both ways ?

Now for another instance of Mr. Shaw's queer contradictoriness. In his chapter on the " Limits of Communism " he shows, very conclusively as it seems, that Socialism, or, more accurately, Common Social Services, can only deal properly and successfully with things that are used by everybody, or which are necessary to everybody, whether or no people are conscious of their necessity. And again on p. 385, when talking of nationalization, he says clearly that he does not mean there are no limits to the process of nationalizing industry : " We could not nationalize everything even if we went mad on nationalization and wanted to." We are grateful for this, which seems one of the sanest, most sensible, remarks in the book. But it is not of much use to us, because just above he insists that equality of income, " his favourite plan," must remain a fundamental principle, any noticeable departure from which must be jealously watched, and tolerated, if at all, with open eyes. " There are no limits to the possibility of its enforcement." And on p. 97, when he is expatiating on the merits of " his favourite plan," he emphasizes in the strongest and plainest language that it never can become a fact, and no Government can bring it about, until it has acquired *all the powers private employers now possess*— *all* the land, *all* the capital. But again on pp. 385–6 we hear talk of nationalization being the rule and

private enterprise the exception, and that long after capitalism "as we know it" (is there a catch here?) shall have passed away, there may be more men and women working privately in businesses of their own than there are at present! This is all very perplexing. First he says we must all have equal incomes (except that it will not matter if playwrights and artists have rather more!). Then he says that we cannot possibly have equal incomes unless we nationalize everything. And he seems to prove it too! Then he says that we cannot have nationalization of everything, even if we were mad enough to want to. And finally, in contradiction to all his careful arguments, he seems to think that equal incomes—or as near as makes no matter—will go on all the same! Well, well!

A fundamental inconsistency in the book is contained in Mr. Shaw's attitude towards human nature, as shown in different parts of it. On p. 92 he gives a genial warning to his intelligent auditor, who, not unnaturally, concludes that the upshot of his remarks is that she ought to join the Socialists. He tells her that Socialists, like early Christians, or modern Christians, and indeed like all other groups of people, whether political or religious, are "a very mixed lot." Some are very nice, some fair to moderate, some thorough bad hats, and all, of course, deserving of Carlyle's generalization! No one but a thorough-going sentimentalist could quarrel with this very fair and reasonable estimate, though we are not sure that his listener got much light thrown on the particular question which was exercising her mind. On page 50, too (and others that time forbids reference to), Mr. Shaw speaks with a very charming note of sympathy

and friendly feeling for the little sister of the human family who goes with one pair of leaking boots all through the winter, while another has forty pairs of high-heeled shoes; one little brother trying to grow up on a penn'orth of food a day, and incidentally breaking his mother's heart, while another big brother spends many pounds on his dinner at a smart hotel. But at other times, indeed most of the time, Mr. Shaw seems possessed with an almost Swiftian loathing of his own species. We are told that the poor are bad in a lump, and know it! that Capitalist mankind is detestable: both rich and poor are hateful. On page 456 he says definitely:

> "For my part I hate the poor, and look forward eagerly to their extermination. I pity the rich a little, but am equally bent on their extermination. The working classes, the business classes, the professional classes, the propertied classes, the ruling classes, are each more odious than the other: they have no right to live: I should despair if I did not know that they would all die presently, and that there is no need on earth why they should be replaced by people like themselves."

Now at the risk of being told by Mr. Shaw that I am one of those weakly amiable "mushy" people whom he specially abhors (and indeed I do not suffer them gladly myself!) I must say frankly that all this outburst of spleen seems to me very silly, and to indicate a very arrogant attitude of mind. I cannot agree with Mr. Shaw's estimates. I do not think the poor detestable, but find among them qualities of loyalty and kindness to which kings and princes might

well take off their hats! And among the rich, not only courage and honour, but sacrifice and the treasure of the humble. Fortunately the gifts of the spirit are not the prerogative of any class or creed, or either sex, but are a purely personal matter. For this reason the wise woman chooses her friends discriminatingly from all ranks, not using tests and shibboleths, but following her own natural inclinations, as people happen to charm or interest her. Mr. Shaw says he would despair of mankind if it were not that under a system of equal incomes he is satisfied human nature will alter fundamentally, and become good enough for all reasonable purposes. It is a blessing for me that I do not share his low view of existing humanity, since I do not believe myself that equal incomes are coming, or are indeed possible! And I think there is every reason to suppose that, whatever political or industrial system we live under, each new generation will necessarily be very like the preceding one, though always, I hope and believe, getting a little higher on the ladder. I, too, believe in "gradualness," the gradual progress of the race, both social and individual, to heights where we can forget "old, unhappy far-off things, and battles long ago."

And as against Mr. Shaw's wholesale impatient condemnation of the past and the present, with which he couples an almost childlike optimism as to the future, when he shall have shattered the old world to bits, so that he may "re-mould it nearer to his heart's desire," we, for our part, would remember that there can be no future except that which grows out of the past and the present. It is *our* present, and we are responsible for our own corner of it any-

way. We shall do our bit better, not by declaring fretfully that all mankind is "bad in the lump," except in so far as it will accept our views and remedies, but by remembering with deep gratitude our debt to the past, and all the sweat and sacrifice on which our present possibilities and hopes for the future are built up.

This will not lead to the stupid sort of conservatism: the apathetic inertia which hopes all will be well, but yet will do nothing to make it so: the selfish acquiescence in things as they are because they happen to be pretty tolerable for ourselves; and "all the easy speeches that comfort cruel men." On the contrary it will make us all the keener so to use our own heritage that our children, and all children, may have a better one. Our sense of the past, and the continuity of things, will help us to confidence and steady patience.

Politicians forget patience! A piece of clever surgery and an artificial limb seem so much quicker than the slow growth and imperceptible healing of nature! But poets are better counsellors in these matters than politicians, or than logicians, or cynics.

> "You think that Squire and I are kings
> Who made the existing state of things
> And made it ill. I answer, No,
> States are not made, nor patched; they grow,
> Grow slow through centuries of pain
> And grow correctly in the main.
> You want to doctor that. Let be.
> You cannot patch a growing tree.
> . . . . . .
> The social states of human kinds
> Are made by multitudes of minds,

And after multitudes of years
A little human growth appears
Worth having, even to the soul
Who sees most plain it's not the whole.
This state is dull and evil, both,
I keep it in the path of growth ;
. . . . . .
And keep the existing social state ;
I quite agree it's out of date,
One does too much, another shirks,
Unjust, I grant ; but still . . . it works.
To get the whole world out of bed
And washed and dressed and warmed and fed,
To work, and back to bed again,
Believe me, Saul, costs worlds of pain."*

* From Mr. John Masefield's poem, "The Everlasting Mercy."

CHAPTER XVIII

ALL THE REST OF IT!

It would be pleasant to follow Mr. Shaw step by step, but yet too long a journey, even though at many of the stations he makes only a brief halt, and touches rather than deals with a subject. We can only allude to some of the more important of his "side-lines" here.

One of the things he evidently feels about with tremendous keenness is the question of taxing Capital, and his arguments against it are not only amusing but extremely cogent. They are chiefly to be found in the chapters on "Domestic Capital" and "National Debt Redemption Levies."

He states uncompromisingly that a tax on Capital is an impossibility (p. 230), and further makes the surprising observation (p. 227) that if any Chancellor of the Exchequer "as a practical business man," actually induced the House of Commons to impose such a tax, under the title of a Capital Levy, "or some such practical business nonsense," he would quickly discover that though everyone in the country was much poorer, the Exchequer would be none the richer. We find this surprising, not, needless to say, because we dissent from his conclusion, but because of his astonishing implication that such a proposal as he describes would

be likely to be put forward by a practical business man ! We can only say that his conception of what such a person would think, say, or do, appears to us to be entirely a figment of his own imagination ! We have yet to hear of any " practical business man " who had any illusions as to the practicability or good result of a Capital Levy ! Mr. Shaw then points out with incontestable force that the Death Duties, often cited as an argument for the possibility of a general tax on Capital, do not furnish one that will hold water :

> " The reason people manage to pay them is that we do not all die simultaneously on the 5th April, and thus incur death duties payable on the following 31st December. We die seldom and slowly, less than twenty out of every thousand of us in one year, and, out of that twenty, not more than two at the outside have any Capital."

Even so he condemns the tax as a " stupid one," operating cruelly and unfairly, not, of course, because it makes the State inherit a part, which is fair and reasonable, but because of its unequal incidence ; some estates, passing normally from heir to heir, perhaps three times in a century, hardly feeling the duties, while others, passing three times in a year (which, he says, may happen easily in a war) are wiped out by them, and the heirs reduced to destitution.

The remark that naturally occurs to anyone here is that this seems rather a criticism on the detail than on the principle of the Death Duties, and hardly justifies the description of the tax as a " stupid one " in itself. Mr. Shaw must be aware that there is already

a time limit, and that the Duties cannot be levied at the same rate, if deaths occur anything like so rapidly as he supposes. The principle that the State, which guarantees security of tenure and inheritance, should take a share of the property for national purposes, when it passes by death to a new owner, seems sound and proper ; but it is a matter of common agreement that the duties often press most unfairly in individual cases, and this should be rectified. It is also demonstrably true, we think, that the comparison between Death Duties and a general Capital Tax is quite unsustainable.

On the other hand Mr. Shaw is careful to point out that though the general taxation of Capital can never produce ready money in any quantity, and is therefore nonsensical as a method of paying off foreign debt, nevertheless it is quite feasible to use it to extinguish domestic debt. It is then, as he says quite simply, a means of confiscating property and redistributing income, and theoretically might be done in the interests of any class, rich or poor. On this he makes the sage comment that though such levies are "physically possible," they are "highly injudicious," since they amount to open raids on private property, rather than the gradual orderly conversion of it into public property, which he favours. True, he reminds us that it will really come to the same thing in the long run ; but still, open raids are like plagues ! They create a sense of insecurity, and are very demoralizing, and lead to reckless expenditure. Why Mr. Shaw should object to reckless expenditure after his declared views as to the undesirability of saving, and the rightness of spending and consuming all we can, is not clear. Nor

does the morality of his motives appeal to us! It seems on a par with saying that robbery with violence is open to many objections, and, after all, is so unnecessary, when we can get all we want by the peaceable methods of fraud and embezzlement! But his conclusions as to the evil effects of taxes on Capital seem perfectly sound!

Another point on which Mr. Shaw is far from seeing eye to eye with the Socialist Party in general, is the question of Trade Unions and Strikes. Many of us, whatever our political party, feel such warm gratitude to the Unions for their long uphill fight in earlier days, fought to secure a decent standard of life and tolerable conditions of work and safety to masses of helpless people, that we wince when we hear them harshly criticized. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that many criticisms on their recent methods and frequent abuse of power are deserved and fully justified. Mr. Shaw's objection to them is that they constitute a sort of aristocracy which, he thinks, will readily ally itself with capitalist big business, and so produce a sham Socialism (pp. 300–8). However this may be, his comments on the principle of strikes in general, and a General Strike in particular, are too apt and shrewd to be missed.

He points out that the proletarian party inherits from Trade Unionism the notion that the strike is its classic weapon and only safeguard, and is therefore dangerously susceptible to the widespread delusion that if all workers in all occupations struck simultaneously and sympathetically, Capitalism must collapse. "This is called the General Strike." And, in a

very amusing passage he explains that this is much as if the oppressed crew of a ship took the advice of a " clever silly cabin-boy " to sink the ship and drown all the oppressive officers and passengers, and proposed after this to take victorious command ! With dry humour he comments that the objection that the crew could not sail the ship without the navigating officers is superfluous, because all alike would be drowned as a preliminary measure, and there would be no ship to sail ! He thinks it would be more sensible to call off all other strikes in order to help a particular one more effectively, but says conclusively that no strikes and no lock-outs can be tolerated, and makes the prophesy that : " They will pass away as duelling has passed away."

We must just glance at Mr. Shaw's review of democracy and the Women's Vote (p. 452), which deserves fuller attention than we can give it. He declares it is only middle-class idealists who believe that the voice of the people is the voice of God : cynical labour leaders know better, and believe that only a process of re-birth could make it safe to allow them to have their way in public affairs. " The naked truth is that democracy, or government by the people through votes for everybody, has never been a complete reality ; and to the . . . extent to which it has been a reality, has not been a success." Extravagant hopes of the results of every extension of the vote for the last hundred years have been disappointed ; quite recently the admission of women to the suffrage was expected to elevate politics and purify public life, but the notion that the woman voter was any gentler or more intelligent than the male proved as great a

delusion as the similar expectations with regard to country gentlemen and business men and manual workers. "If there were any disfranchised class left for our democrats to pin their hopes on, no doubt they would still clamour for fresh votes. But the majority show signs of having had enough of it." (pp. 452–5).

This is a very condensed version of what is at the best a partial one-sided statement, indeed almost a travesty of the beliefs and expectations of convinced democrats, A vast amount of rubbish was, no doubt, as we all remember, talked about the Vote, but thoughtful and reasonable people who felt it right to support all extensions of the suffrage did so from motives quite other than any silly belief that one sex or one class is wiser or better than another. At the same time it is worth quoting the passage, because it contains some valuable home-truths. It is right that democracy in general, and women in particular, as well as the Trades Unions, should realize clearly that they are by no means regarded with general approbation, even by those who may be supposed to be their friends, and that they should take steps to put their house in order. It is also interesting to notice what an intensely anti-democratic thing the theory of pure Socialism, as expounded by Mr. Shaw, really is.

Mr. Shaw's views as to Marriage and Divorce are too well known from his other writings to need close examination. He sticks gallantly to his guns. He is convinced that the unhappiness of unhappy marriages is only endured because of economic necessity, and that since Socialism and Equal Incomes will do away with this necessity they will infallibly break up

unhappy marriages. He concludes that this will be an excellent thing, but that it will not necessarily mean a great increase in the number of family dissolutions, because tyrannous husbands and parents, having the power of the purse taken from them, will have to learn to behave better, and will, in fact, do so. There is a good deal to be said for this, if you admit Mr. Shaw's premise that marriage is simply a civil contract, like any other contract, and that the only reason why anyone remains faithful and helpful to an unworthy husband or wife is financial pressure. Obviously there is a different view, and there are other reasons which might account for this phenomenon, but I will not attempt to develop them here.

As to children, and their right and reasonable education, there again Mr. Shaw's opinions are familiar to most of us, and there is a lot of sound sense and good feeling in many of them. He argues forcibly against the imbecility of much of our current so-called education, and the iniquity of forcing either children or adults to study subjects for which they have neither taste nor ability. He makes one exception—obviously a right and necessary exception—in favour of compulsory instruction in " the three R's," because these are the keys to all possible future self-education. He also remarks with great truth that there are some things which people living in a civilized State *must know*, in order to play their part as citizens : technical things which must be learnt, like giving change, and intellectual conceptions which must be understood, such as that you must not take the law into your own hands. But when you have taught the child the essential minimum in these matters you had best

leave it alone to find out for itself what is best for it. Give it access to books and teachers and it will learn what it wants to know. If it does not want its mind cultivated probably its mind knows what is best for it. "Mentally, fallow is as important as seed-time." This is admirable, and very far away from most of our modern educational theories and systems.

Where one comes to debatable, and, more than that, acutely dangerous ground, is when he turns to what he calls the child's "social creed and catechism" (pp. 424–8). He is quite clear that any Socialist State would (and indeed must, since otherwise its existence would be impossible) refuse to permit parents, guardians, teachers or nurses to inculcate their own religious, moral or social views into the minds of children, unless, of course, those views happen to coincide with those of the Socialist Government. If parents are found doing so they will be warned. If they persist, the children will be taken from them and made wards in Chancery. Mr. Shaw seems to overlook the fact that his Socialist Government will not be infallible, any more than the parents or nurses! Both are liable to error: neither can give more than the best they know, which, admittedly, is often wrong and very deplorable. Yet one cannot avoid these dangers by deciding to leave the child's mind a blank in all religious, moral and social matters. Having created a vacuum, something will certainly rush in to fill it. It may be good or bad, but the story of the house, left empty, swept and garnished, to which seven devils repaired, seems a fair analogy, and not a hopeful one. One thing which can be said for our present free private system, with all its drawbacks, as against Mr. Shaw's uniform,

controlled Government system, is that it is far more flexible and easily corrected, since it is not invested with the power and authority of the Sovereign State. If one family teaches an objectionally narrow code, or obsolete doctrine, enforced with threats of hell-fire and brimstone, doubtless it will injure the minds and consciences of its children, and cause much needless misery. And this is most regrettable. But the next-door neighbours will probably take quite opposite views, and school-mates other views again, and the children as they grow up will make their own criticisms and choices, and find a way of escape. This is just what never could happen under Mr. Shaw's scheme. His State—knowing best, of course, about all spiritual as well as all material matters—would lay down one creed and one catechism, and permit no alternatives. Such a prospect opens appalling vistas of narrowness and intolerance, hardly to be contemplated with equanimity by anyone except a Gallio ! Would that the shade of John Stuart Mill could return and remonstrate with Mr. Shaw ! Fortunately no parents—of whatever way of thinking, whether atheists, church people or philosophers, and no Houses of Parliament, which, after all, are themselves in the main composed of parents, either actual or potential—are in the least likely ever to acquiesce in such an abomination of desolation !

This seems indeed the fatal flaw in the whole conception of the Socialist State. As Mr. Shaw truly says, it can neither come into being nor continue in existence unless Government has full control everywhere. That must obviously include the control of the Press, of broadcasting, of films and theatres, and indeed of

every means by which new ideas can be sown in the soil of the public mind, to bring forth their fruit in due season, whether good or evil. Such a control can only mean a gigantic, all-enveloping State-Censorship. It is almost inconceivable to us that Mr. Shaw, of all people ! should stand for a censorship, but there seems no getting away from it. Such a censorship might use its colossal powers moderately and discreetly, or with blatant tyranny, or, which is perhaps the most likely, simply stupidly ! But the fact would remain the same in either or any case : freedom would be dead. Neither freedom of speech nor freedom of writing could exist under these conditions, and soon, as an inevitable consequence, we should lose even the capacity for freedom of thought !

CHAPTER XIX

THE END OF IT!

WHEN one comes—a little exhausted it may be—to the end of this monumental work of Mr. Shaw's, it is difficult to analyse one's impressions. It is hard to see the wood because of the innumerable trees, and, still more, because there is so much undergrowth, and such a mass of entangling creepers. All these not only distract the traveller and trip her up, but also make a general view almost impossible.

If the book is picked up at random, and a few pages read here or there, it makes stimulating and provocative reading. But when a serious attempt is made to follow a consistent argument from one chapter to another, the trail is blurred, and all seems vague and confused. The conclusions—where any are arrived at—refuse to blend and integrate into a coherent whole. What is stated on one page appears to be directly contradicted on another, when the same subject is being dealt with in a different connection. Terms usually supposed to have quite distinct meanings are used indifferently, as if they were identical. Mr. Shaw leaps from theme to theme with bewildering rapidity, and one is left baffled, as after watching the zig-zag path of flashes of lightning across a dark sky, with an impression of dazzling brilliance but no sense of direction. Yet direction is

the quality, of all others, which is demanded of a Guide.

One thing is certain, and that is that whatever has been written about the book, here or elsewhere, is, in a sense, bound to be wrong! Because, however accurately Mr. Shaw may have been quoted and summarized, an industrious reader is sure to be able to delve into some recess of this mine of words and discover that he has also said something quite different! And it will always be open to argument which of the conflicting statements he really means, and which are merely instances of his delightful art of fooling.

Another thing is that it is quite impossible to touch on every point which Mr. Shaw has raised, for the simple reason that we should never have done! It is only feasible to choose a few of the infinite number of fields on which he offers battle, and try to meet him fairly on these. What has been attempted here is to concentrate chiefly on the question which he has himself declared to be the beginning and middle and end of his whole conception of Socialism, viz. Equality of Income. If this does not hold good, then, as he sees himself, the whole edifice he has so laboriously reared collapses. Among the debris of his house we may, and surely shall, find marbles, mosaics, bits of sculpture or jewels of worth, but, as a house, we shall only be able to say of it that it was built upon the sand and it fell.

At one place in the Guide, where Mr. Shaw pauses for a moment to take breath, he says that if by that time he has not convinced us of the truth of his arguments and made good his case as to equality of income,

he will be driven to think that we must dislike him ! Nothing could be wider of the mark ! No woman could cordially dislike the creator of Lady Cecily Waynfleet and Major Barbara, for whose sake we are ready to forgive him even for Ann ! In fact, it is only our immense liking for Mr. Shaw which has enabled us to bear with the interminable length of his Guide. But plain speaking is best. He has set before us a Gargantuan meal, and we have found it windy and indigestible ; indeed we have been compelled to refuse its main course altogether. But it is not only our sense of good manners that compels us to say grace for what we have received ! We say it cordially, because of the *hors d'œuvres* and salted almonds served throughout the repast, and some of the choice fruits of the dessert, which have saved us from going empty away after a long sitting !

Mr. Shaw assures us that he could "go on like this for ever!" We are quite sure he could, but we do hope he won't ! It seems such a pity when he might be writing plays. He is too much of an artist to spoil *them*, and surely his prefaces give him sufficient scope for the airing of all his political and economic views !

We end, then, on a note of ineradicable personal affection and regard for Mr. Shaw, even though it is mingled with infinite exasperation ! We hope he may live to write a dozen more great works. Only, please, may it be plays and prefaces, with the pill of propaganda not presented nakedly to our reluctant palate, but disguised beneath the usual delectable coating of jam ? Some of us have grown quite expert in licking off the jam and not swallowing the pill ! We should

not like to be so rude as to say we have found the pill poisonous : we will only say it has not agreed with us. But it is always the very best jam !

And now to turn to those of you, my faithful sisters, who have honoured me by reading this little book to a finish. It will have been seen that no extreme views or bitter sentiments are expressed in it, for indeed they are foreign to the feelings and opinions of the writer, who is essentially a woman of peace ! If any one of you, to whatever political party you may happen to belong, has been wounded by a careless or clumsy word of mine, I am deeply sorry. My urgent desire is that we should see how far we can walk together, not wasting our energies on bickerings and blows, but concentrating them on our contribution, whatever it may be, to the Common Good. Yet a point comes when honesty compels us to part company, recognizing, though regretfully, that we are unequally yoked together. Many people who have genuinely strong Labour sympathies are yet unable in common honesty to " vote Labour," because it commits them to a Socialist programme, including Capital Levies, thousand-million Budgets, Nationalization of Industry, and so forth, which they sincerely believe would be fatal to the welfare of the whole community. Even so, there is no need to part as foes who hate each other, though fate may range us on opposite sides of the battle.

What is the conclusion of the whole matter ? People are fond of dividing the world up into Socialists and Individualists, but these labels do not help us greatly, or get us farther than labels generally do. Mr. Shaw

has told us graphically what unpleasant people individual Socialists can be! And perhaps even more unpleasant are individual Individualists of a certain type! Those, I mean, whose motto would appear to be "'Each for himself and God for us all,' as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens!" What is there to choose between people on either side, when both are actuated by just the same selfishness and greed—one out to keep, and the other out to grab? Ethically there is nothing to choose; you can only say that possibly there is more excuse for one than the other! But neither will help the world forward to the better things we all desire.

What we want are people whom I would describe as *Social Individualists*, in contra-distinction to Selfish Individualists. Individualism in its proper sense means, I take it, simply a full recognition of every man's and every woman's separate individuality, and entails a deep respect for their liberties and rights to self-development and self-expression. These should be limited only by the equal rights and liberties of others, and the great maxim* of the English Common Law, which might be freely translated: "So use thine own that thou hurtest not thy neighbour." You cannot get rid of Individualism, even if you dislike it, because it is an instinct, embedded deep down in the core of human nature. It is not to be extirpated by the most drastic surgical operations or prolonged medical treatment. It cannot be seriously weakened without destroying something of infinite value both in the person and in the whole body politic. It is, I repeat, an instinct;

* "Sic utere tuo ut alienum non lædas."

and all modern psychologists teach us that it is useless, as well as wrong and dangerous, to ignore or condemn or despise, much more to try and eradicate our instincts. They cannot be eradicated, because all our life-forces are inseparably intertwined with them. The proper course is to discipline and control them : to sublimate them from base to high uses.

And that is where the Social Individualist—" my favourite plan," as Mr. Shaw would say—comes in. There is nothing, I firmly believe, of lasting value that ever has been done or can be done for the whole Society, except what is done by and through the separate individuals of which it is composed and for whose sake it exists. That does not mean, of course, that combination and collective action are not necessary in any group, and most of all in the huge complex fabric of a great modern community. The Herd instinct is as real as the Ego instinct or the Sex instinct ; team spirit and loyalty to the group, are immensely valuable factors in disciplining the naturally selfish impulses. A world of individuals refusing to co-operate, and all acting separately and independently, would be a world of chaos ! But it does mean that the dominating motives and emotions which rule action, whether group action or separate action, are, and always will be, strongly individual motives and emotions. It implies a strong conviction that men and all their works develop best in the atmosphere of the greatest freedom, and, consequently, that the State should interfere in private lives and private activities only to the extent that is absolutely necessary in the interests of social justice. That is to say that, far from the Socialist ideal of a beneficent State control-

ling every department of human life and running all of them by means of armies of Civil servants, individualists believe that there should be the maximum personal liberty and the minimum of State interference. In short, they believe emphatically that the State was made for men and not men for the State. Even so, it will be found that under modern conditions there is plenty for the State to do in maintaining justice and freedom, inspecting private enterprises, seeing that the laws made by the people in Parliament are respected, and that good employers, as well as their employees, are protected, by the punishment of them that do evil, and by that prevention of abuses which is better than cure.

It is interesting to note a certain change in attitude towards Individualism in recent political and philosophical utterances. There seems to be a growing feeling that the pendulum had swung too far in the direction of concentrating on abstract conceptions, such as Collectivism, the Sovereign State, Society as a Whole; while neglecting the all-important units—the separate individuals. You must accept these as they are, that is to say, full of good and evil. You must draw out and utilize all that is vital and wholesome in them, and try to convince and correct them if you think they are wrong. But always give them space to grow and stand alone: never crush or override their deepest instinct, which is to develop their own inmost personality. Never let a natural pity lead you to help them in such a way as to devitalize and demoralize them, sapping the independence and self-confidence which alone give the vivid colours of real joy and the sound of trumpets in human life. Give help freely wherever

it is needed, but let it be the human personal help given in the spirit of brotherhood, which hurts no man's self-respect; for this is the only kind which blesses him that gives and him that takes.

Now this brings us, you see, to the real point at issue between those who believe in Equal Incomes for all, good and bad, industrious and lazy, competent and inefficient, and those of us who condemn these ideas. We do so, not only because we consider them quite impracticable and uneconomic, but above all because we believe that they are incompatible with a good life and a free life for the individual. We are convinced that they will lead to weakness and mediocrity, not to strength and the coming of the supermen whom Mr. Shaw desires; they will make for grey monotony and boredom, instead of the stimulus of effort and struggle, and the gladness of conquest. Natural Selection and Survival of the Fittest are phrases deservedly suspect when applied to the modern world and its moral and political problems. The evolution of our moral and social ideas makes us realize that many of those whom the ruthless forces of Nature would simply have exterminated in earlier cruder ages, may be the most valuable sons and daughters of the race. In preserving them we may be helping to survival those who are really most fit to benefit the world by some gift of brain or character, despite physical unfitness. For this, and many other reasons, we welcome all those schemes and services, whether national or voluntary, which are directed towards that ideal of Equal Opportunity of which Mr. Shaw is so disdainful. Education for all; special schools for the cripple, the delicate child, the blind and

the deaf and the mentally defective ; special training for young delinquents ; hospitals for the sick ; pensions for the old and widows and orphans ; and insurance against accident and unemployment. All these are ways of helping those who cannot help themselves, such as any good family would plan and approve for their poorer and weaker members, both out of brotherly feeling and clan pride, and also in the interests of the whole group. The great human family can and should do likewise ; not grudgingly but in a spirit of good will and cheerfulness.

But all this is utterly different from the idea of dry-nursing and supporting those who will not exert themselves to help themselves. Neither the private nor the public family will, if they are wise, encourage children to rely too long on allowances from the family stock. Nor will they permit idle uncles and waster cousins to sponge on the rest, and drain the family or the national resources. For them we prefer St. Paul's advice to Mr. Shaw's ! As a matter of fact Mr. Shaw is, of course, in fervent agreement with the saint on this point, and we are in fervent agreement with them both. When Mr. Shaw tells us that by far the most unjust and mischievous privilege that can be claimed by the rich is the legal right to be idle, and that the person who consumes goods and accepts services without giving some equivalent in goods or service, is inflicting on the country precisely the same injury as a thief does, we think he is absolutely right. All who take the advantages of wealth and position without performing the functions that properly belong to them, are doing a mean action, as well as incidentally putting a nail in their own coffins. This last does not, perhaps, matter much, but what does matter is that they are dishonouring

their whole class. We can hardly have a better social ambition than to pay into the national exchequer in goods and services more than we drew out in income, and so deserve the very beautiful definition of a "lady" which Mr. Shaw suggests: "One who, generously over-earning her income, leaves the nation in her debt, and the world a better world than she found it."

It is a hard thing to draw such a spiritual balance sheet! Perhaps no human accountants are capable of the task, or even of knowing just what is an asset and what a liability! But this, at any rate, can be said, that Mr. Shaw's fine phrase represents a purely individualist conception, and has nothing to do with Socialism any more than with Capitalism. It is the ideal of giving rather than getting, and is quite independent of the more or less, the equality or inequality of incomes.

The real cleavage between the Socialist and Individualist standpoint is that the Socialist thinks of the battle of life as a general's battle, which will be won by better organization and greater uniformity. But we think that it is a soldier's battle, and that the ultimate victory will depend not on any super-staff-work, but upon the individual qualities of the individual soldier.

Wyman & Sons Ltd., Printers, London, Reading and Fakenham

Date Due

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CAT. NO. 23 233 PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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